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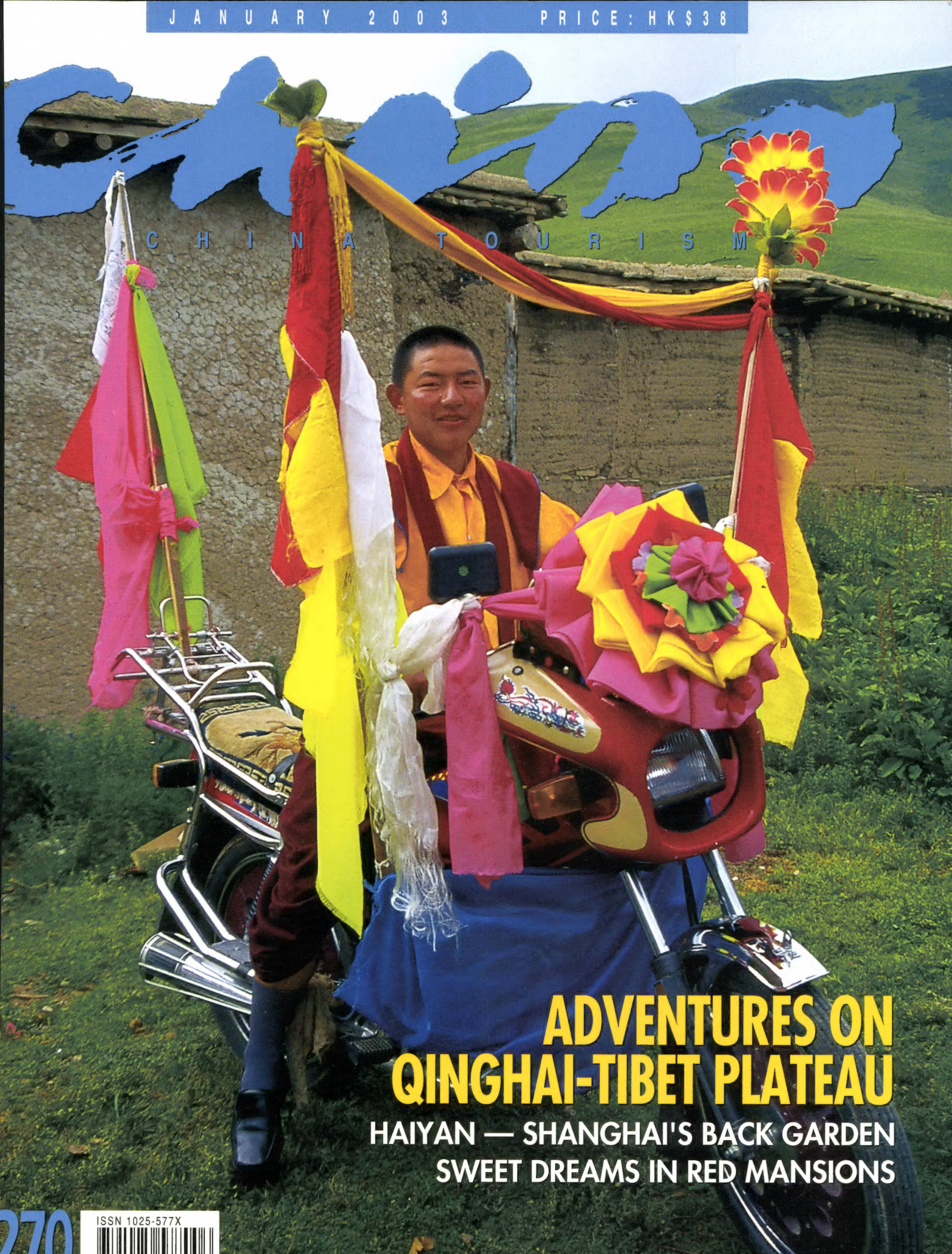

ADVENTURES ON QINGHAI-TIBET PLATEAU

HAIYAN — SHANGHAI'S BACK GARDEN

SWEET DREAMS IN RED MANSIONS

270

ISSN 1025-577X

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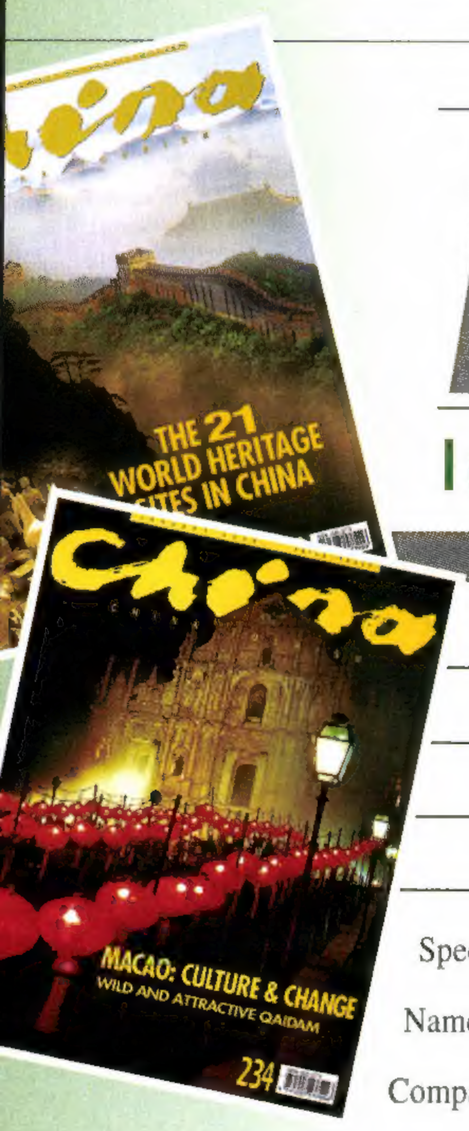

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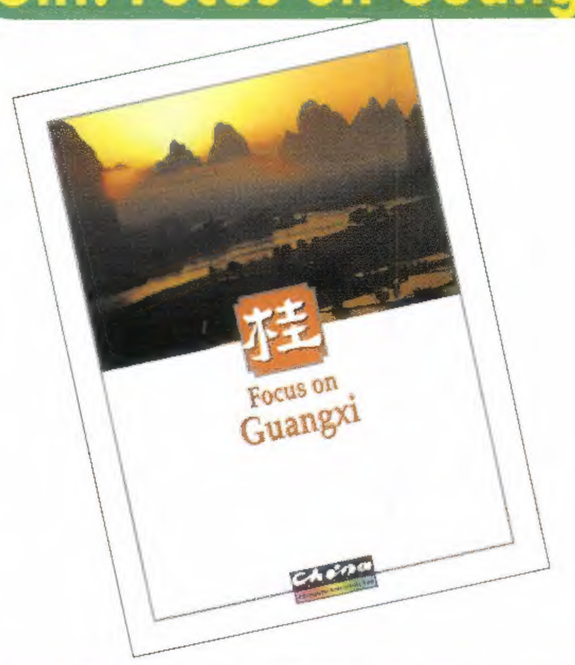

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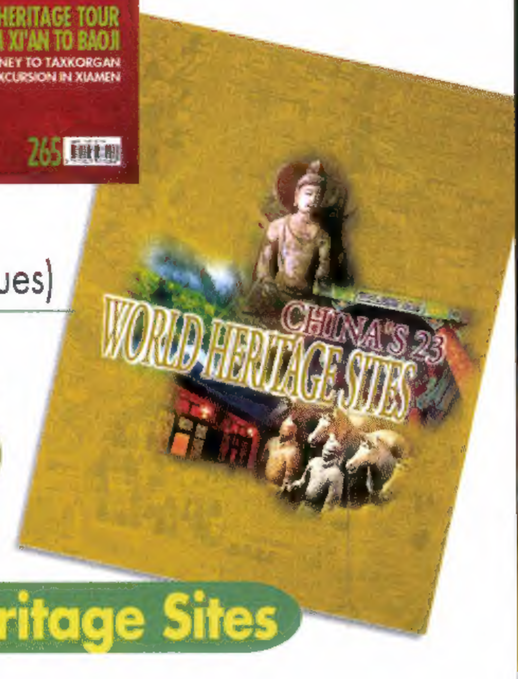

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China
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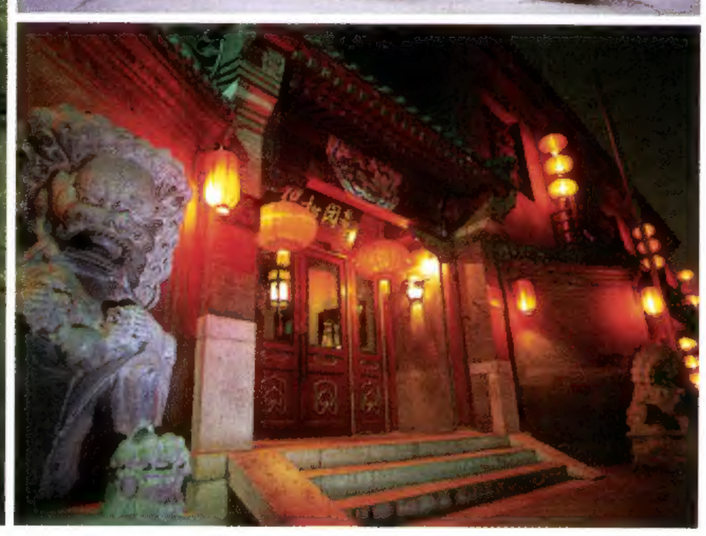
Cover: A lama with his colourfully decorated motorbike (by Dianna Lau)



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Article by Wang Xueying

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— On the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau
Photos by Dianna Lau, Wang Miao, Cai Zheng, Xie Guanghui & others Article by Dianna Lau

As soon as the Tibet Tourism Bureau announced in last May that travellers from Hong Kong and Macao no longer had to apply for special permission in entering the Tibet Autonomous Region, our correspondent immediately set for her new trip to Tibet without applying the travel visa. After flying to Qinghai, she first enjoyed the annual grand horserace gathering in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and saw the world's largest Mani piles. Then, a "Living Buddha" drove her to Dêgê in Sichuan Province, before she finally took a bus westward along the Sichuan-Tibet Highway to Lhasa. All need to be prepared for the tour is the hardships one will meet on the way which test the will and physical endurance.

City Snaps

46 Sweet Dreams in Red Mansions
Photos & article by Dianna Lau

By using local accommodation a visitor can experience the most authentic cultural background of the destination. Therefore, when staying in Beijing, the writer has picked a quadrangle house (siheyuan) to stay, and has good times there.

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52 Tracing Ancient Dyeing in Wenzhou
Photos by Ma Jianhe, Li Yuxiang, Xiao Yunji Article by Zhang Qin

The indigo dye produced in the township of Huangtantong in northern Leqing County, Zhejiang Province, once had the best reputation for quality. The locals made the indigo by stirring decomposed woad leaves and powdered lime in a huge dye pit. They even tested the acidity and alkalinity of the mixture with their tongues. However, these ancient dyeing techniques seemed to have disappeared since the Song Dynasty....

Readership Survey

China Tourism always appreciates feedback from its readers. In accordance with your suggestions, we have recently added a variety of new columns. Still, we need to know more of your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

Please give your evaluation of the stories in this issue and your overall impression of *China Tourism*.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Adventures on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Sweet Dreams in Red Mansions	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Roaming Through Shanxi's Stately Houses	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Haiyan — Shanghai's Back Garden	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Anshan — a City Cast by Iron & Steel	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Others: _____	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Photographs	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Cover	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
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Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It provides us with invaluable feedback which will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine for you.

*Please mail this questionnaire to our office at 24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, or fax to (852) 2561 8196.

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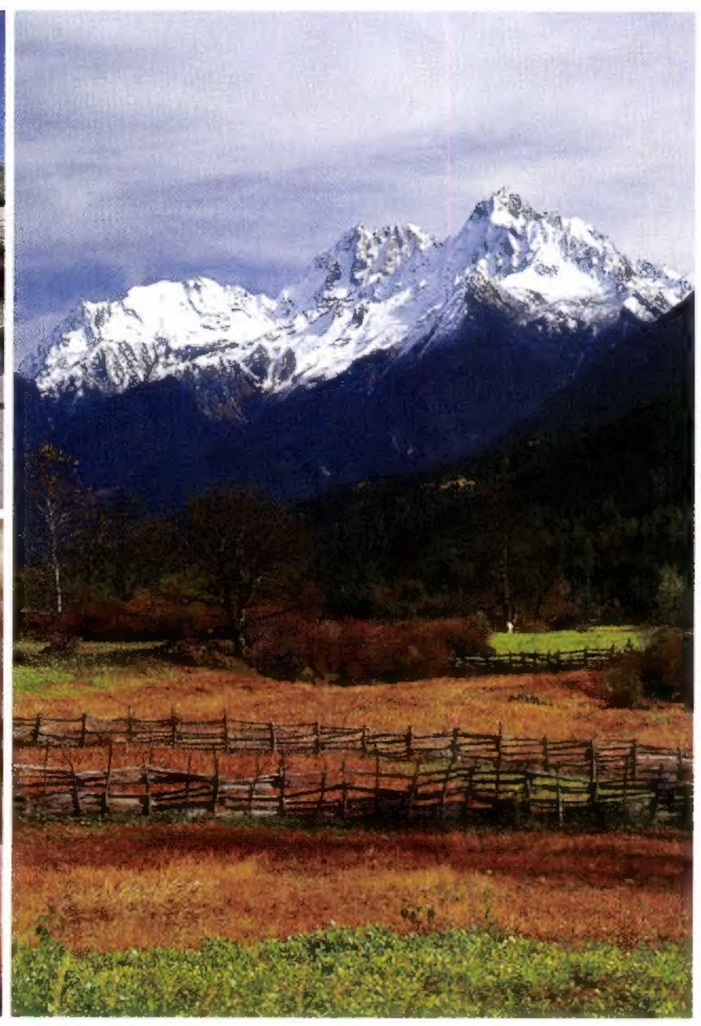

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58 Roaming Through Shanxi's Stately Houses
Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

The Qiao Family Mansion located in North China's Shanxi Province became famous around the world after the shooting of a Chinese film. Actually, the central area of Shanxi was the birthplace of China's merchants. We welcome you to have a stroll along these antique, ostentatious houses after renovation.

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64 Haiyan — Shanghai's Back Garden
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70 Anshan: A City Cast by Iron and Steel
Photos & article by Xie Guanghui

Less noticed by tourists, Anshan, a city located in Northeast China's Liaoning Province, actually has been chosen as the second best tourist destination in middle Liaoning after Shenyang. The city is where the world's largest jade Buddha, the spectacular Qianshan Mountain Scenic Area, and time-honoured hot springs are found.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Drawn to Tibet

This month our main feature follows the road to Tibet from the point of view of the backpacker traveller.

Now Tibet has long held a fascination for so many people worldwide. In bygone days when the Dalai Lama ruled in feudal splendour from the magnificent Potala Palace he was vested with a mythical status from afar. That was part of Tibet's allure, the mystery, the romance, where so little was known about what Tibet was really like that seekers after enlightenment could give fertile imaginations free rein ...

The 21st century casts a cold objective light on many previously out of the way places and fewer and fewer secrets remain undiscovered. Fortunately Tibet still weaves its spell for many of us, one we are willing to be enthralled by. The world's tallest, wildest mountains draw us inexorably towards them, and man has always invested great spiritual significance in their awesome majesty.

However, the reality of daily life for a traveller in Tibet is sometimes far from romantic, particularly for the lone adventurer. The backpacker's creed — it's the journey that counts, not the destination — can be sorely tested. The unpredictable weather, the difficult roads, the altitude, the limited facilities in remote locations can conspire to reduce a traveller to despair. One of our writers, an experienced traveller, admits she felt tears of helplessness welling up during one predicament. Yet at other times she was overwhelmed by what Tibet has to offer the stranger prepared to accept a challenge, make an effort and put up with a few discomforts in return for inspirational scenery and exceptional human warmth.

So let's be thankful there are still places left in this world to inspire us, provide the stuff of dreams.

Photo by Huang Songhui

Taiwan Returning Ancient Buddha Head to Mainland China

A Taiwan religious organisation was planning to return a precious 1,000-year-old stone Buddha head to its historic roots in mainland China's Shandong Province in December 2002.

The relic, which is highly representative of Buddhist culture in China before the Tang Dynasty, was presented to Master Sheng Yen, founder of the Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM) Foundation in Peitou, Taipei, earlier in 2002. It was a gift intended for display in the DDM Museum of Buddhist History and Culture that is under construction.

But after thoroughly inspecting it, experts confirmed the Buddha head to be the missing head from the Akshobhya Buddha statue located at the east wall of the central column of the Four Gate Pagoda at Shentong Monastery in northern China, built during the Sui Dynasty (581—618) and ranked in 1963 as China's most important artifact.

Rebuilding Ancient Cities in Xinjiang

The two ancient cities of Gaochang and Jiaohe are to be rebuilt as a tourism venture near Turpan City in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The reconstructions will give visitors a picture of the cities as they were some 2,000 years ago. Tourists will be invited to such ancient activities as lighting "war beacons" on towers.

Established more than 2,100 years ago, Gaochang used to be a prosperous town along the ancient Silk Road 46 km east of Turpan. However it was damaged by war in the 14th century.

Jiaohe, 13 km west of Turpan, was founded 2,300 years ago and used to be the capital of a state in the western region. The ruins cover half a square kilometre on 30-metre-high loess land. Houses in the Tang Dynasty architectural style can still be seen.

Gaochang City, Turpan

Giant Buddha Statue Due at Mt. Jiuhua

A 99-metre-high copper statue of the Bodhisattva will be erected at the foot of Mt. Jiuhua, one of China's four major Buddhist shrines, in East China's Anhui Province.

Designed by Tianjin University, the statue will feature a religious aura at the spring and autumn equinox. The archetype for the Bodhisattva is Kim Kiao Kak, a prince from the Kingdom of Silla (today's Korean Peninsula) who according to historical records, went to Mt. Jiuhua in 719 and served as a monk there until his death aged 99.

Dinosaur Site in Guangdong to Become Theme Park

A site known for its dinosaur relics will soon be home to a theme park for the prehistoric creatures in the Tongguling area, five kilometres south of Maoming city in western Guangdong Province.

The theme park, to be created at the suggestion of the local culture management department, will encourage relic protection, scientific research and tourism.

Tongguling has yielded many dinosaur egg and bone fragment fossils and is covered with unusual red sandstone strata dating from the late Cretaceous period when dinosaurs thrived. Some scientists believe the strata may still contain complete dinosaur skeletons.

In addition to the concentrated dinosaur fossil sites, Tongguling also boasts scenic landscapes and luxuriant vegetation.

Qinghai-Tibet Highway Undergoes Fourth Major Upgrade

The fourth major renovation of the Qinghai-Tibet Highway is expected to be completed by June 2004. Starting about a year ago, the upgrade is needed to accommodate increased traffic due to the ongoing construction of the Qinghai-Tibet railway.

The most important part of the work is renovating the section from Golmud in Qinghai to Lhasa in Tibet, involving new asphalt surfaces and reinforcement of bridges and culverts.

The 1,937-km highway now carries 85 percent of freight traffic in and out of Tibet and 90 percent of the passenger traffic. China has spent almost six billion yuan on maintaining the highway in recent decades.

Dujiangyan Renovation Underway

At a cost of 30 million yuan, the renovation of the 2,250-year-old Dujiangyan irrigation system in Southwest China's Sichuan Province began recently. The refurbishment will not affect the water supply for irrigation, industrial purposes and urban living. Tourists are still welcome to watch the whole process.

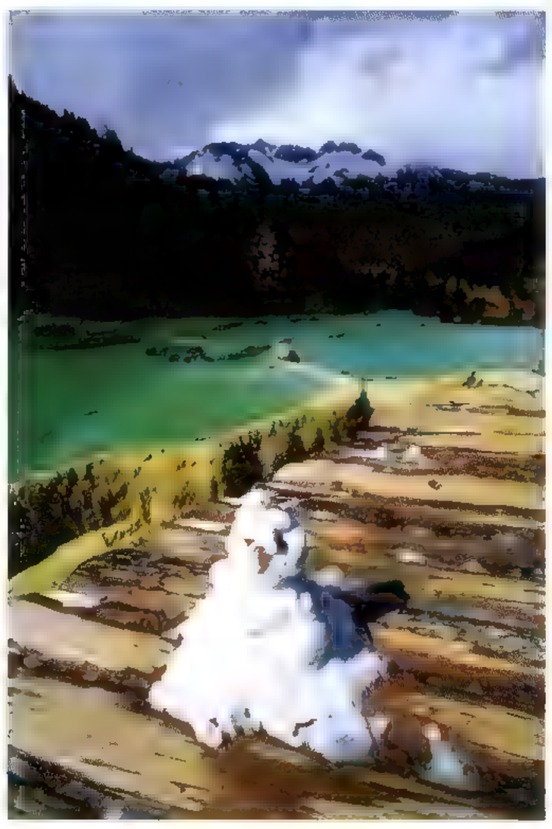
Constructed in the 3rd century B.C., the Dujiangyan system controls the waters of the Minjiang River, distributing it to the fertile farmland of the Chengdu plains and irrigating some 667,000 hectares. Dujiangyan was added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2000.

Huanglong Scenic Area Closes for Winter

As an environmental protection move, the Huanglong (Yellow Dragon) Scenic Area is off-limits to tourists from December 1, 2002, to March 31, 2003.

Added to the World Heritage list in 1992, Huanglong in Songpan County in Southwest China's Sichuan Province, is the country's only world heritage site to close its gates to tourists during the winter.

Huanglong is famous for picturesque natural landscapes including snow-capped peaks, glaciers, diverse forest ecosystems, brightly coloured highland lakes, waterfalls spilling over karst cliffs, and caves filled with stalactites.



New Bridge Being Built Across the Yangtse

Yangzhong, a prosperous island city in East China's Jiangsu Province, started construction on its second bridge spanning the Yangtse River in late November.

The new 1,761-metre-long bridge estimated to cost 180 million yuan will connect the island to Changzhou City on the southern side of the river. It is expected to be open to traffic by August 2004.

With a land area of 228 sq km and a population of 300,000 people, Yangzhong is the second largest island in the Yangtse River. The city built its first bridge over the river linking the island to Zhenjiang City in 1992.

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Dunhuang Website Operates

[illegible] By logging on to http:idp.nic.gov.cn Chinese viewers can scan the huge collections of ancient Buddhist Dunhuang documents collected by the National Library of China (NLC) and the British Library (BL).

The website boasts nearly 10,000 titles of digitalised Dunhuang documents, with more than 50 actual documents and 300 images. The cave, sealed 850 years ago, once held more than 50,000 relics dating from the fourth to 11th centuries. However, these documents became scattered around the world. The NLC has collected over 16,000 pieces and the BL more than 13,000. In the future, the two libraries plan to post all their Dunhuang collections on the website.

The Dunhuang Library Cave in northwest China was accidentally found by a Taoist priest when he was clearing sand from the No. 16 grotto on June 22, 1900. The Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang were listed as World Cultural Heritage sites in 1987.

China's Largest Ski Centre Opens

[illegible] The Yabuli Ski Centre in Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province has opened to the public a month ahead of schedule due to four early snowfalls since late October.

The ski centre, 195 km north of Harbin, Heilongjiang's capital city, boasts a 3,000-metre-long ski run, and is the largest of its kind in the country. It is also the largest ski training centre in the country, and the venue for the yearly China International Ski Festival as well as annual meeting of the China Entrepreneurs' Forum.

Encyclopedia on Tibetan Medicine Published

[illegible] An encyclopedia containing about 400 different Tibetan medicine formulas has been published by the Shanghai Science and Technology Publishing House.

The one-million character book is the first multi-volume encyclopedia designed to feature major traditional medicines still popular in China. Its compilation was the result of 13 years of work by more than 40 specialists from the Pharmaceuticals Institute attached to the Tibetan Medicine Hospital in Tibet, which is under the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Luxury Cruiser Launched in Zhuhai

[illegible] A luxury ship offering "Romantic Cruises on the Pearl of Huijia' has been officially launched. The ship provides up to six services daily between Zhuhai in Guangdong Province and Macao SAR. The first luxury cruiser in Zhuhai, it was built quickly in six months at a cost of more than 10 million yuan.

The cruiser has three decks providing 180 seats, with conference rooms and karaoke suites. It departs from the Beiti Passenger Pier in Xiangzhou, Zhuhai, calling at Qinglu Road, Yeli Island and Jiuzhou Island. In Macao it calls at such places as the Friendship Bridge, International Airport, Bank of China Building, Hotel Pisco and Macao Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre, before finally returning to the departure point.

Tickets: 98 yuan (including a buffet)

Services: The schedule is subject to festivals and public holidays. Daily sailings range from one to six, with usually four services at 10:30, 14:30, 18:30 and 21:00. Would-be travellers should first check the times for the day's sailings.

Duration: 2.5 hours Enquiry: (756) 2225 104

Great Wall Section Becomes World Heritage Site

[illegible] A 1,704-metre section of the Great Wall in northeastern Liaoning Province was listed as a World Cultural Heritage Site in November by UNESCO.

Built in 1381 in the 14th year of Emperor Hongwu's reign in the Imperial Ming Dynasty (1368—1644), the wall section stands on a riverbed at Jiumenkou, in Xintaizi Village, Suizhong County. Many cultural relics including large iron and stone guns, exquisite porcelain bowls and big jars, have been excavated from the site in recent years, enabling archaeologists, historians and military experts to gain a better, in-depth understanding of the ancient military garrison positioned there.

The Jiumenkou Great Wall is the 27th World Cultural Heritage Site in China to be listed by UNESCO.

Visa-free Entry Period Extended

[illegible] Hong Kong Egypt Egypt has extended the visa-free period for HKSAR passport holders from 14 days to 90 days. In return, the HKSAR government has extended the visa-free period for Egyptian passport holders from 14 days to 90 days.

Archeological Breakthrough in Eastern Zhejiang

Zhejiang A large number of Paleolithic sites have been discovered in East China's Zhejiang Province, enabling scientists to trace the existence of humans in Zhejiang area back at least 126,000 years. Zhejiang was once considered China's only province without Paleolithic sites.

The latest findings are the resultant from one-month efforts of an archeological team formed jointly by the Zhejiang Provincial Archeology Research Institute and the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology (IVPP) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

A total of 31 Paleolithic sites have been discovered, including five with clear stratums. One site has yielded 333 pieces of stoneware, including stone balls, stone hatchets, and other stone tools and stoneware used for cutting or smashing.

The findings are of great importance since they help to extend the Paleolithic humans' activity areas one degree longitude eastward in southern China.

Dabao Expressway Opens

Yunnan The Dabao Expressway connecting Dali and Baoshan, two major cities in western Yunnan Province, has opened to traffic. As it shortens the distance between the cities, the road is convenient for tourists heading to Tengchong County located at the western foot of Mt. Gaoligong. Apart from being known as the homeland of many Chinese living overseas, Tengchong County, sandwiched between the rest of China and Myanmar, is rich in such tourism resources as volcanoes and vast wetlands.

Xiamen and Hangzhou Win Global "Garden City" Titles

Fujian Zhejiang Two cities in China, Xiamen in Fujian Province and Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province, won first and second place respectively in group E in the international "Garden City" Contest 2002 held in Stuttgart, Germany.

The whole contest is divided into five groups according to population. Group A is for of cities with a population under 20,000, Group B from 20,000 to 75,000, Group C from 75,000 to 200,000 and Group D from 200,000 to one million. Competition among Group E cities with a population above one million, represents the highest level of the contest. The first three places in each group win the title of garden city.

A total of 42 cities from 21 countries reached the final round this year. Chicago in the United States came third in Group E. China's Shenzhen won first place in Group E in 2000, and Guangzhou came third last year.

Giant Trees On View in Alishan

Taiwan Tourists can now appreciate the giant red junipers growing in the Alishan Scenic Area thanks to the completion of the second stage of a mountain trail at this renowned tourist destination. Previously tourists could see only another type of tree common in Alishan—"sacred wood", that grows mostly along the first section of the trail. From the flat second section of path, tourists can see lots of giant trees. The whole trail extends for more than one kilometre, which takes about an hour to walk.

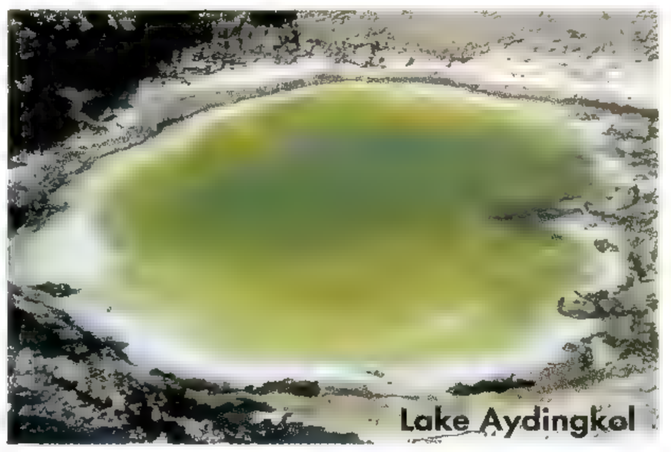
Enquiry no.: (886) 5-2594 308 (Alishan Scenic Area Administration)

(Information by Taiwan Visitors Association)

Large-scale Afforestation Project Underway

Xinjiang China has launched an afforestation project which aims to plant 1,200 hectares of shelter forest in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region within five years.

The trees will be planted on sandy areas near Lake Aydingkol and is expected to cost China's government 6.63 million yuan with another 8.27 million yuan donated by the government of the Republic of Korea (ROK). Located in the Turpan Basin, Lake Aydingkol is the lowest point in China, with its surface more than 150 metres below sea level.



The afforestation project is expected to protect an additional 1,200 hectares of sandy lands from further wind erosion, thus improving the environment around Turpan City in Xinjiang.

Mt. Changbai, Haven of White Snow

Travel The Mt. Changbai (Eternal White) range in the southeastern part of north China's Jilin Province, separates China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). It stretches 310 km from south to north and 200 km from east to west, covering over 60,000 sq km. Volcanic landforms occupy a further 10,000 sq km.

With its striking presence and broken terrain, Mt. Changbai is known as a "microcosm of temperate and frigid zone ecosystems" where 2,540 species of wild plants and animals can be found. These include genseng — one of the "Three Treasures of Northeast China", and Northeast tigers and leopards.

Besides being the source of three rivers, the Songhua, Tumen and Yalu, Mt. Changbai also boasts Tianchi (Heavenly Lake), the highest and deepest crater lake with the largest surface area of any in China.

The winter scenery on Mt. Changbai attracts photography enthusiasts every year. The average temperature there in January at an altitude of 300 metres is -18.5°C while at 2,626 metres above sea level it is -24°C. Tourists can first fly to Changchun, Jilin's capital city then take local buses to the mountain scenic site.

Admission: Northern slopes~60 yuan; Western slopes~60 yuan; Waterfall track~10 yuan; Floating Rocks~10 yuan; mountain museum ~15 yuan

Real Bullets Shooting Range Opens in Zhongshan

Guangdong The Quanlin Villa located in Sanxiang, Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province, has become the first shooting range in the city to allow the use of real bullets. Covering 3,000 square metres, the range provides small-bore rifles, pistols, machineguns, submachine guns, air guns, and clay pigeon shooting, all with real bullets to add to the excitement of the games.

The range is a 365-day all-climate venue open to the public. Visitors first must buy an admission ticket to the villa (2 yuan). It offers military programmes like tracer-bullet field exercises, target-shooting, cross-country tank rides, firing cannons, and stunt man shows.

Costs: small-bore rifle ~ 25 yuan/ 10 shots; pistol ~ 30 yuan/ 10 shots; machinegun ~ 80 yuan/ 20 shots; submachine gun ~ 80 yuan/ 20 shots; clay pigeon shooting ~ 60 yuan/ 10 shots; airgun ~ 10 yuan/ 10 shots
Enquiry no.: (760) 6688 369/ 6688 166 (ext: 123)

Biggest Lake in North China to Be Nature Reserve

Hebei Hebei provincial authorities have designated to construct Baiyangdian, the biggest lake in North China, as a nature reserve for the protection of wetlands and birds. Seven billion yuan has already been allocated over the next 10 years for 26 projects aimed at restoring and protecting the ecological system on the lake.

The lake, covering 366 sq km, is the habitat of 47 kinds of water plants, 54 kinds of fishes, 192 kinds of birds and 14 wild mammal species. At least three kinds of birds and five species of mammal are protected by the state.

However, persistent draught, pollution and silting over the years have led to reduced lake area and damaged to its ecological system.

Measures mulled include improving the distribution of water resources in the upper and lower reaches, building more urban sewage treatment plants and reducing pollution from the use of fertilizer.

China's First World Culture Exhibition Centre Under Construction

Fujian Construction of the country's first world culture exhibition centre, designed to showcase cultural heritages from around the world, began recently in Quanzhou, a coastal city in East China's Fujian Province.

The exhibition centre is being created for the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage held by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2002 to highlight cultural heritage as a means for peace and reconciliation as well as development.

Quanzhou, China's oldest port from the Song Dynasty (960—1279), is home to such rich traditions as the tea ceremony, southern (classical) music, puppetry and folk customs.

The Magnificence of *Mt. Tianmu*

Writer: Wang Xueying (王雪瑛)

Editor. Currently lives in Shanghai, originally from Zhejiang. Studied Chinese literature under Mr. Qian Gurong, receiving a master's degree in 1989.

"Magnificence" is one of those words I rarely use because it's hard to find a subject that genuinely deserves it.

One mid-summer, I visited Mt. Tianmu at the invitation of some friends. We stayed at the Shuiyuan Resort in Lin'an County, Zhejiang Province. It was built at the water's edge and the foot of the mountain, so close at night we felt as if we were out on the whispering waters, heightening anticipation for the next day's expedition.

Tianmu is famous for thousands of breathtaking views as well as miles and miles of deep lush forests, hence it is known as "a natural botanical gardens" and "the kingdom of great trees". With its ranges that stretch from east to west and mountain lakes like huge eyes gazing at the sky, one appreciates the significance of the name Tianmu-Heaven's Eyes. I silently prayed the age-old wisdom and benevolence of the mountain and the water would wash away my city blues.

As soon as we set foot on Mt. Tianmu, ripples of greenness seemed to radiate in front of us. There's a remarkable difference between being on the mountain and off it. The air here is refreshing and clean, scented with pine needles and various plants. Every breath seems to seep deep within and scour one's lungs. Walking up the stone steps of the forest path, we felt bathed in misty drizzle. The deeper we went, the more the coolness soaked right through us, so much so we seemed to sense the great mountain's low breathing. I couldn't help but imagine the walk into the mountain and forests would lead to a rendezvous with a higher being.

As we went, we all breathed deeply — a natural oxygen bar, according to some, or nature's air-conditioning to others. The trees looked ancient and luxuriant in the shade but when the sun broke through the clouds again the leaves seemed to drip with green.

Our friends up ahead stopped for a close look at a giant cypress through their long-lens camera. Th's cypress has such a huge trunk even two people with arms outstretched reached only halfway around it. Its bark was mostly gone and there were many wrinkles on its brown trunk left by the passage of time. But the tree stood straight and was still covered with green leaves extending its longing for life towards the sky. The sharp contrast of age and youth on this cypress surprised me yet also seemed quite natural.

I've heard more than 1,300 members of the cypress family are growing on Mt. Tianmu, of which over 400 are more than one metre in diameter. The daddy of them all, however, has a diameter of 2.75 metres. Lingering in the verdant coolness, we searched for old, tall, rare, and beautiful trees rather than strange peaks and treacherous cliffs.

Absorbed in the rustling of the pines and the soul-cleansing quiet, I raised my head to see rows of tall trees soaring straight to the sky. Their bark has a vivid texture resembling the patterns on spotted leopards, I don't know if that's why they're called Spotted Pines. A label beside one revealed these trees are all over 40 metres high, the tallest at 56 metres is called "skyscraping tree". Its height is roughly that of a 20-storey building!

Before visiting Mt. Tianmu, I barely knew what constitutes a great tree. But these groves perfectly illustrate the word "magnificence".

Looking down, we only saw darkness, and their roots were nowhere to be found. How lonely and achingly long the growing process must be for these trees! All sorts of shrubs, wild ferns and vines vie with them for space and light; to reach above it all to the sky is an arduous and distant wish. It takes years of patient waiting, persistence and resilience, and a strong will to live for each tree to aim for the far-away sky, endlessly growing, growing, inch by inch, year after year. Without enduring the prolonged silence and darkness, without withstanding the test of bitter winds, frost, hard rain and snow, without reaching deep into the soil with their roots, the trees could never be where they are now, standing proud above all with pleasing views over everything.

The valley remained silent and the great trees wordless. I think "magnificence" doesn't just mean being tall and straight but encompasses the spirit of generosity and depth while ever growing and surpassing oneself.

When night fell, we left the mountain bound for Lin'an. Recalling the vast book that is Tianmu, I realised we were too rushed for me to learn much and one day I would return for a closer read.

FEATURE STORY

A BACKPACKER'S ADVENTURES — ON THE QINGHAI-TIBET PLATEAU

Photos by Dianna Lau, Wang Miao, Xie Guanghui, Cai Zheng & others Article by Dianna Lau

In mid-2002, the Tourism Bureau of Tibet unofficially announced that travellers from Hong Kong and Macao no longer had to apply for special permission if they wanted to visit the region—good news for backpackers not wishing to see Tibet with a big tour group. This has greatly eased people's entry to Tibet. You don't necessarily have to fly to Lhasa, the regional capital, but can go overland. Apart from the beaten track of the Qinghai-Tibet route from Golmud to Lhasa, you can consider going via Sichuan Province. And from Sichuan, you don't even have to leave from Chengdu. Instead you can go from Xining to Yushu in Qinghai Province, into Sichuan at Dêgê and from there on into Tibet. This way you will have a chance to visit both Qinghai and Sichuan along with the Tibet Autonomous Region in one trip, getting a full feel for the unique scenery and lifestyles on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

However, you must be well prepared mentally for hardships along the way when you set out on the Sichuan-Tibet route, noted for its charming and enigmatic scenery. The journey will test mind and soul as well as your physical endurance.

GETTING TO KNOW QINGHAI-TIBET PLATEAU

Map by Yang Zhiming Information by Yang Luhua

Geographical conditions : The vast plateau in Southwest China encompasses the whole of Qinghai Province and the Tibet Autonomous Region, the southern strip of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the western part of Gansu Province, the northwest of Sichuan Province and a number of counties and cities in northwest Yunnan Province. Some 2,700 km from east to west, and 1,400 km from north to south, it is China's largest highlands covering a total of 2.26 million sq km. On average, the plateau is more than 4,000 metres above sea level with many mountain peaks rising more than 6,000 metres. This makes it the highest plateau on earth and why it is known as the "Roof of the World".

Mani piles in Jiana, Yushu

Horserace gathering in Yushu

Natural outlook : In terms of topography and climate, the plateau can be divided into six natural scenic areas: the Himalayas area, the Yarlung Zangbo valley, the eastern mountains, the Ngari area in the west, the northwest Qiangtang area and the northeast highland basin. Each part embraces its own snow-covered mountains, deep river valleys, an array of lakes, dense forests, expansive stretches of grassland and numerous hot springs.

Climate types :

The plateau weather conditions range from South Asia tropical monsoon climate, temperate broad-leaf forest climate, temperate grassland climate, temperate desolate land climate to frigid desolate land climate.

Low air pressure and low oxygen : The high altitude makes the air thin and pressure low. The scarce oxygen supply makes it hard for human beings to breathe. The higher the land, the harder it is for fire to burn, causing difficulties in daily life. The low pressure at 5,000 metres above sea level, only half that on the plains, reduces the boiling point of water to 84°C.

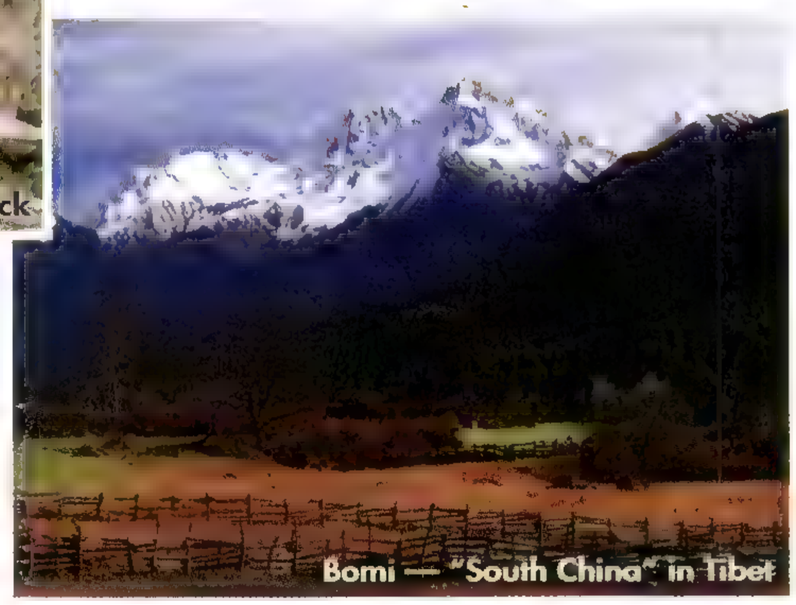
Jokhang Temple, Lhasa

The Dongfeng truck

Cold : Highlands are characterized by great variations between daytime and nighttime temperatures and between the sunny and shaded sides of the mountains as well as little difference between temperatures in different months of the year. As a result there is "no summer but four seasons in a day". The higher the area, the lower the temperatures there. Every 100 metres further above sea level brings a drop of 0.6℃ in temperature.

Dry and windy : Low precipitation (mostly falling from July to September), long hours of sunshine and quick evaporation make the highlands very dry. The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is the region affected most by strong winds (force 8 gales or 17 metres/second) in the country. The winds blow across extensive areas and last a long time. Each year, 100 to 150 days are strongly windy.

Ultra-violet rays : High altitude, and thin but very clean air allows strong light and snow reflections. This increases the penetrating ability of the sun's rays and raises the ultra-violet content. At every 100 metres higher above sea level the intensity of ultra-violet rays increases by 1.3 percent.


Bomi — "South China" in Tibet

Reep flowers in Xining

Ethnic groups : The plateau is inhabited by 2.25 million people of the Tibetan, Han, Monba, Hui, Tu, and Mongolian ethnic groups with Tibetans in the majority. Most of the Tibetans are pious followers of Tibetan Buddhism.

Summary : Our Hong Kong/ Qinghai/ Sichuan/ Tibet trip took 25 days. How long you spend on your journey will depend on weather, road conditions and the availability of buses and vehicles.

Day	Itinerary	Stop	Altitude (m)
1	Hong Kong → Shenzhen → Xining (flight)	Xining	2,275
2	Visited Tar Monastery, rape flowers, etc	Hainan county	2,450
3	Passed Sun & Moon Mountain, Xingxinghai	on a small truck	3,700 ~ 5,100
4	Jigu town, Horserace and Tibetan dance and singing	Jigu town	3,700
5	Horserace and Tibetan dance and singing performance	Jigu town	
6	Jigu Temple, horserace, Changu Temple, bonfire party	Jigu town	
7	Rgyanag Mani piles, Leba Valley, Temple of Princess Wencheng	Jigu town	
8	Went to Dêgê and Langdo county with Living BuddhaLiving	Living Buddha's home	
9	Visited Temple in Langdo county, lama and opening light ceremony	same as abv	
10	Crossed Sêrxu and Xinluhai to Dêgê county seat	Dêgê county seat	3,200
11	Visited Dêgê Sutra Printing Hall, Gengqing Temple	Dêgê county seat	
12	Bus to Jomda Town of Tibet, visited Tibetan residences	Jomda	3,700
13	Bus to Qamdo	Qamdo county seat	3,200
14	QangbalingTemple, Qamqing street, arts & crafts market	same as abv	
15	Bus to Bomi	a small town	
16	On the way from Banda to Baxoi	on the bus	4,300
17	Baxoi to Bomi	Bomi county	2,700
18	Bomi to Lunang	Lunang town	
19	Stayed at Lunang and visit Tibetan's family		
20	Lunang to Lhasa	Lhasa	3,650
21	City tour in Lhasa	Lhasa	
22	City tour in Lhasa	Lhasa	
23	Morning train to Golmud of Qinghai Province	on the train	3,650 ~ 5,206
24	Arrived at Golmud at night then changed night train to Xining	on the train	2,800 ~ 2,275
25	Arrived at Xining		

"Living Buddha" in Changu Monastery, Yushu

Sutra Printing Hall in Dêgê

Route of the writer
Provincial boundary
National boundary

FROM XINING TO YUSHU : STIRRED BY THE HIGHLANDS

I felt weighed down by a sense of invisible pressure soon after I decided to travel to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. After all, sheer bravery would not be enough to conquer Qinghai, Sichuan and Tibet single-handedly. I had to take into consideration such practical issues as luggage, physical condition, lodgings, food and safety.

Joining a Photography Group

Before I set out, I heard a photography group from the Central Art and Photography School in Beijing was planning a trip to Qinghai, mainly to take pictures of the annual Yushu Horse Race and Tibetan religious and lifestyle subjects. So I applied to join them.

Toward the end of July in 2002, I arrived at the Qilianshan Hotel in Xining, Qinghai, to meet with the group at the agreed time. The party consisted of a group leader, Miss Hong Xing who specializes in pictures of western scenery, and a dozen other photography buffs from Beijing and Shanghai.

My first impression of Xining was of serenity. The tempo of life here, whether at the railway station, the hotel or the restaurants, seemed to be several times slower than in other cities.

Due to our particular schedule, during our first few days in the city we did not visit Qinghai Lake and Bird Island, both classic sites for photography. Instead on the very first night we went straight to the evening market at Shuijing xiang, a place where local people gather for warm snacks and delicacies. One can eat to one's heart's content kebab, baked bread, Hui-style flour strips in soup, hand-made noodles, beef and mutton soup, etc., all for a few dozen yuan. To experience food culture like this can be as equally rewarding as a trip to the oft-visited great lake and seeing the birds there.

The Famous Tar Monastery

The next day we went to see the Tar Monastery in Huangzhong County, the most famous one in Qinghai. The Tar Monastery, along with the Gaindain, Braspung, Sera and Tashilunpo in Tibet and Lablang in Gansu, is considered one of the six great holy sites of the Gelugpa Sect of Tibetan Buddhism, and plays a prominent role in the religion. The temple occupies an area of more than 40 hectares and is built against the side of a mountain. It consists of 15 halls and 9,000 cells and at its peak housed more than 3,000 monks. The golden tile-roofed hall was the birthplace of Zongkapa, founder of the Gelugpa Sect. No wonder disciples keep coming to the place to present hada in front of the stupa and bow and prostrate themselves in total devotion.

The Tar Monastery is also famous among Tibetans for four unique things of great artistic value: coloured sculpture, murals, embroidery and butter sculpture.

Dusk had fallen when we came out of the Tar Monastery. Immediately we turned south toward the Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

First Highland Adventure — Mountain Sickness Strikes

After spending a night in Hainan Prefecture, we rose at 5 a.m. Since we had to cover more than 600 km of

mountain road, we had all three meals, consisting of canned porridge, pancakes and spiced eggs, in the mini-bus.

As we were hard pressed for time, everybody stayed in the bus all day. Many sections of the road after the lake were under maintenance. If your vehicle misses the time scheduled for transit, you have to wait ages for the next opportunity. Luckily there were beautiful mountains and valleys for us to view to help kill time when traffic was held up by the constant road works.

When we finally left behind the area where the road was being repaired or constructed and approached the grasslands at the Bayan

Opening page: Yak known as the "Plateau Boat", is a unique transportation tool for Tibetan people (by Zheng Yunfeng)

1. **Qinghai province mainly inhabited with Tibetan, Han, Hui, Mongolian and Tu nationalities, the population of Tibetan nationality in Yushu county is about 97% (by Zheng Yunfeng)**
2. **The 4,377 metres high Sun and Moon Mountain is the divide crest of loess plateau and Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, is also the only way which must be passed Ancient Road between Tang Dynasty and Tubo Regime (by Cai Zheng)**
3. **Grand sight of rape flowers can be seen in July and August in the outskirts of Xining (by Cai Zheng)**

FROM XINING TO YUSHU :
STIRRED BY THE HIGHLANDS

1

Har Mountain Pass, the fuel tank of our mini-bus suddenly developed a leak, spilling petrol on to the ground. We got out to stretch our limbs while the driver tried to fix the problem.

Since leaving Xining, everybody was in good health and was taking medication to prevent altitude sickness. I was the only one not taking such medication and I continued to let my body adjust to the mountain conditions on its own. Getting out of the bus, everyone was in high spirits and we did not go back inside until the sun had set and the temperature dropped. People who were sleeping on the grass suddenly felt an attack of altitude sickness when they tried to get up. Those less affected looked pale while the serious cases began vomiting. Those who were already in the bus became drowsy. Immediately the whole group was gripped by a sense of anxiety. The tour leader urged people to take medication and use their oxygen bags.

As the saying goes, "misfortune never comes singly". The driver now announced there was no way to fix the problem of the fuel tank! The group leader tried to call for help but there was no signal on his mobile phone. We then tried to hitch-hike but there were few vehicles passing by. The only solution was to despatch people to get help. Half an hour later, a warm-hearted area maintenance worker not only lent us a small truck but also brought us medicine.

Hurriedly we moved along with our luggage into a small truck roofed with a piece of canvas. It was only half the size of our mini-bus. Like a bunch of refugees, we squeezed aboard. The dust the truck stirred up then sneaked in under the canvas roof and troubled the people who were already suffering from a lack of oxygen. Unfortunately, the temperature dropped to below zero centigrade and in this unhappy manner we travelled for seven hours.

Mind Over Matter Works

For the first four hours, I was asked to sit in the driver's cab along with those fellow travellers most severely stricken by altitude sickness. One of my jobs was to take care of them, producing timely plastic bags and tissues. Hong who sat next to me, had been to the plateau several times. Between spasms of vomiting, she told me: "Every time I come, it's a near death experience as I keep throwing up and each time I tell myself this will be the last time. Somehow, I keep coming back." Her words underscored the magnetic charm of Yushu.

As the truck dashed along in pitch darkness, I had no idea where we were. I do remember clearly, however, that during a certain section of the road my heart started to beat fast, my head seemed to want to explode and my chest ached. I had never experienced this combination of symptoms before and almost regretted my decision not to take medication against altitude sickness. Still I persisted, slowed down my breathing and stayed motionless, trying to relax by imagining I was a snake in hibernation. After about ten minutes, it worked. Later I discovered the attack coincided with our crossing the Bayan Har Mountain Pass, 5,000 metres above sea level.

After midnight, we parked outside a small restaurant by the roadside and the tour leader urged us to eat something. My fellow travellers, however, were afraid of throwing up again and did not want to eat much.

An hour later, people returned to

3

2

4

the truck and eventually we reached Jigu Town. Those in our party with severe symptoms of altitude sickness were rushed to the hospital while the others went to sleep in a hotel.

Our itinerary in Yushu was fully packed. During four days, we not only watched and photographed all the fantastic shows at the horse race, but also visited Jigu Temple, the largest monastery of the Sakya sect, the largest pile of Mani stones in the world, the fairyland-like Leba Valley, the Temple of Princess Wencheng ...

Most memorably, I then arranged to ride with the county governor in his car to the county seat of Dêgê.

1. The car is approaching to Bayan Har Mountain Pass, people is easy to get altitude reaction there because it is 5,000 metre above sea level (by Zheng Yunfeng)
2. Early winter plateau has a mysterious colour (by Cai Zheng)
3. Snowcapped mountain, grassland and river (by Cai Zheng)
4. Sharp contrast between wild scenery and modern life (by Cai Zheng)

FROM YUSHU TO LHASA :
A HARD ROAD ON THE SICHUAN-TIBET HIGHWAY

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FROM DÊGÊ TO QAMDO:
SMOOTH SAILING INTO TIBET

The trip to Dêgê with the county governor was an eye-opening experience. During the drive of more than ten hours, we visited the King Gesar Memorial Museum on the Axu Grassland, called on the lamas at Xieqing Temple and went into the tent dwellings of herdsmen on the Maniganggo Grassland. We saw snow-capped mountains and highland lakes and crossed smoothly over the Quer Mountain 6,000 metres above sea level before arriving at the county seat.

Though small, Dêgê boasts the three-star Quer Shan Hotel, and Internet bars, teahouses and restaurants nearby. From the hotel, it is a half-day walk to the renowned Dêgê Sutra Printing Hall, Genqing Temple and the Tibetan-style dwellings on the mountain.

At seven next morning, I went to the bus station near the hotel and bought a ticket to Jomda in Tibet from the makeshift ticket office. Those waiting for the bus were mostly Tibetan residents and Sichuan businessmen. I was the only tourist. The bus was 30 minutes behind schedule but 40 minutes later we crossed the Gangtuo Bridge spanning the Jinsha River and entered the territory of Tibet.

Jomda is located in the mountains. As the bus drove through those mountains, I could not help feeling I had left myself below and was flying high above the earth. The most interesting part was when I saw several eagles hovering by some cliffs below us and then diving still further down. To look from above at their beautifully stretched wings was an experience you can only enjoy in highlands like this.

When the bus drove into the Jomda County seat at noon, it was already too late to catch any bus leaving for anywhere else. I had to

spend a night there and so checked into the small hostel inside the bus depot.

Uneasy Moments

Having checked in, I went out for a walk. There were many outdoor teahouses packed with visiting businessmen. At the end of the street, I found several Tibetan houses, each with a beautiful garden. As I was photographing them, a young house owner stuck out her head from a window and asked me what I was trying to photograph. I told her: "I find your house pretty and I want to take a few pictures." She smiled and invited me in for butter tea. I had a wonderful afternoon.

At dusk, I returned to the street hoping to get a haircut, as I had no idea when the next opportunity might arise on the road ahead. When the barbers shop owner found out I was alone, he told me not to venture outside in the evening, saying the local Tibetans always made trouble. They especially made it difficult for barber's shops, he said. I said nothing but my experience told me that Tibetans are among the most hospitable people. If some day they singled me out, I would have to ask myself if I had done anything against them to cause their hostility.

Modernised Qamdo

After a full night of sound sleep, I caught the 7 a.m. bus to Qamdo the next morning. The 14-hour drive was on the whole rather uneventful. The only complaint I had was over the several hours wasted on the way because of busy traffic.

As Qamdo drew near, it seemed both familiar and strange. The Qamqing Shopping Street under construction last year was now completed. There was also a new square, new hotels and houses. The city appeared much more modern. I stubbornly walked toward the Jambalin Monastery on the mountain like an old horse that knew its way home. The temple was also under construction. The monks house I had visited a year ago had been dismantled, causing me to lose my way.

I arrived in Qamdo on a Wednesday and there happened to be a flight to Lhasa the next day. The weekly flight, however, had been fully booked. Visitors had to take the land route, particularly at this time just before the Shoton Festival.

Translated by F. Huang

1. The Xinluhai scenic spot at the foot of Quer Mountain is going to be developed (by Xie Guanghui)
2. Jambalin Monastery in Qamdo (by Xie Guanghui)
3. The lama of Jambalin Monastery is making buttered tea (by Wang Dajun)
4. 5. The small village of 26 families at Caoi town of Qamdo is famous for processing bronze statue and painting *Tangka* (by Xie Guanghui)

FROM QAMDO TO BOMI : A DANGEROUS ROUTE

Although Qamdo in eastern Tibet is a big town, the regular bus service to Lhasa is limited to only twice a week — on Tuesdays and Fridays — and Friday's was full. As I stood there worrying about the bus I spotted some other tourists and immediately went to talk to them, hoping to find a way out-maybe renting a car. Mr. Song from Shanghai, Xiao Yan from Shenyang and Ah Hui from Guangzhou (the Three Cavaliers for short) were also heading for Lhasa but couldn't get tickets either. Finding out there was a bus to Bomi, they decided to cut the journey into two to save time. That's a good idea! I decided to do the same.

Only Five Kilomertres in Two Hours

The bus started at exactly eight o'clock the next morning. I sat on my own by the door, putting my big backpack under my legs and holding a small one on my knees. Close beside me sat an old lady and her granddaughter, who were going to visit their relatives in Bomi. Most of the passengers were Tibetans, either pilgrims or business people. The "Three Cavaliers" and I were the only passengers with big backpacks.

The road was bad, either mired from the rains or barely passable due to road works. One careless move and the bus would be bogged down. Our bus got stuck many times and only travelled five kilometres in two hours. What rotten luck!

But we were lucky to have the Tibetan passengers who were so warm-hearted and united. No matter what troubles we had, they were always ready to help and never looked depressed. Many times they worked in teams in heavy rain or under the scorching sun, soaked with rain or sweat as they carried stones or pushed the bus, or sought help from fellow townsmen. The more problems we encountered, the more helpful and optimistic they became. We were really fortunate to have such companions who could always turn a mishap into

something amusing.

We reached a small town at nine o'clock that evening. After the driver set the departure time for the next morning, we all got our luggage and went to find a place for the night. I stayed in a grocery store by the roadside, sleeping in a simple room next to the kitchen. Shabby though it was, I was warm enough to have a good night's sleep.

Stuck Overnight On the Bus

The next day we all boarded the bus on time and continued our journey. This bus turned out to be even worse than the previous day's — if it wasn't stuck in the mud then its engine would cut out. It stopped every 10 minutes and the passengers were all exhausted.

As our bus moved slowly into the well-known Nujiang River valley, we all became nervous because the place was highly vulnerable to landslides and floods during the rainy season of July and August. On seeing a 4WD car crushed flat by the roadside, the only thing we prayed for was to get out of here as soon as possible. As if to compound the misfortune, the wretched bus suddenly stopped below some large craggy rocks. We didn't know what to do. If we stayed in the bus, we might get caught when a landslide rushed down; but once out of the bus, we still might be hurt by falling rocks. The driver said we had run out of gas because he had forgotten to fill up before setting out. What an unbelievably absurd blunder!

Again, it was the Tibetans to the rescue, patiently stopping passing cars until they obtained enough gas for the bus so we could escape from the danger zone.

Our bus moved as slowly as a snail and didn't reach a small town to find a place for lunch until 4 p.m. An hour later it moved off. Then about 9 p.m. we ran into a heavy downpour of rain. The bus was stranded in the mud again on the plateau over 4,000 m above sea level. We were surrounded by deathly quietness, only the lighted

1. The grassland in Bamda is very beautiful (by Wang Miao)
2. The plateau Rawu Lake is really worth seeing even after a hard journey (by Lin Jinghua)
3. On a truck to Bomi county

FROM QAMDO TO BOMI : A DANGEROUS ROUTE

cigarette of the driver could be seen glowing in the darkness. Puffing out smoke rings he said: "The road is too bad. For your safety, we are not going any further today and will stay on the bus tonight." I was dumbstruck.

Though extremely dissatisfied, we passengers could do nothing.

We all tried to get some sleep and get comfortable in whatever way we could on the jam-packed bus, which was even more crowded than the previous day. Night on the plateau is very cold, and some snow fell after midnight. Sitting by the door, I was constantly attacked by the cold highland wind. Even wrapped in my padded down overcoat, I could hardly sit still but kept looking at my watch, praying for sunrise.

All through that seemingly endless long night, I heard groans from those suffering from cold, hunger, backache or stiffness. Yet among the moaning some melodious songs and prayers surfaced, a different way of coping with the difficult circumstances.

When dawn finally came, the engine was started and our bus moved again. But almost straight away, it skidded into an immense quagmire because of our driver's poor driving skills. Muddy water flowed in and made a mess inside. Male passengers at once jumped out of the windows one after another to shovel mud and carry rocks and dig a ditch to drain the water. It took an hour before we got going.

Tips:

- When taking a long distance bus, it is better to prepare enough food for two days just in case the bus breaks down and has to stop midway. The food shouldn't be too heavy. In my opinion, a big Muslim pancake is the best: it can stave off hunger and keeps pretty well, and costs only five *jiao* each.
- A torch is a must, as it is useful either on or off the bus.
- Be sure to take enough warm clothes and a raincoat. In summer on the plateau, it may reach well over 20℃ during the day, but drop sharply to below zero at night.

By Truck in the "Fast" Lane

After all our troubles with the miserable bus, we finally lost confidence in it. So when an empty Dongfeng truck passed by at "high" speed, we four backpackers shouted almost in unison: "Let's go!", realising such a golden chance should not be missed.

Although we would have to pay an extra 50 yuan each, it was worthwhile for the saving in time. There were already a few Tibetans standing on the truck. Climbing onto it excitedly, we immediately felt the sharp contrast with the bus — plenty of space and unimpeded speed. Uninhibitedly we shouted at the tops of our voices.

Tips: You can hitch-hike trucks, big or small, on the road at any time. Better to choose an empty truck, and do not pay until you reach the destination! Chances are the truck might break down or get stranded in bad traffic, so you might have to change vehicles several times before arriving.

Hiking in the Rain Over Mt. Rawu

We had expected no more nightmares with vehicles after changing to the truck, but we were wrong. Two hours later, all traffic stopped before Mt. Rawu. It turned out an explosion was due shortly to start large-scale road works lasting at least three days. The workers advised us to return to our previous bus for shelter. It was a bolt from the blue. After the cold night on that wretched bus yesterday, who could bear staying for three more days on that pathetic vehicle?

It began to rain heavily. We stood helplessly outside the road workers tent. Then the bus arrived too. The Tibetans, as before, were by no means dismayed after being informed of the situation. Since the road was impossible, they said we could hike on the mountain path and it would take only three hours to get over Mt. Rawu. Then we could hitch-hike on the road by Rawu Lake to get to Bomi.

Knowing we would have to carry all our backpacks (at least 20 kg) and hike in the heavy rain for three hours on a mountain over 4,000 m high, I felt very depressed. While I hesitated, the Tibetans were already on their way up the mountain. Anyway it was better than staying on that bus for three more days and nights. We learned the hard way that when travelling on the plateau, one must take whatever chance comes along to continue the journey, because one can never tell what might happen after a hold up. The longer the delay, the greater potential for trouble.

I had two backpacks ,they weighed 20 kg, a rather heavy weight for one person at an altitude of over 4,000 m where oxygen is limited. Still we were lucky to have a rather clear and easy path on the mountain and the scenery was excellent. It was such a pleasure to hike and take the occasional rest. Looking down from the top of the mountain over charming Rawu Lake is an experience not every tourist can enjoy.

We reached the main road at about 4 p.m. After a quick meal we followed the Tibetans onto another truck, and drove to Bomi amid their happy singing.

Tips: To cope with the situation when you suddenly have to hike, best have one backpack that is as light as possible. When something unexpected happens, follow the advice of local people.

1. Tibetans make a fire for tea because of road construction ahead (by Xie Guanghui)
2. The bright-coloured plateau flowers (by Wang Miao)
3. Herdsmen drive their cattles on Sichuan-Tibet Highway (by Wang Miao)

FROM BOMI TO LHASA : WAITING FOR A RIDE

We reached Bomi late at night dog-tired, so everyone had a sound sleep. It was not until 10 the next morning that we went looking for a bus. There was no direct bus to Lhasa, only cross-country vehicles to Bayi Town which all left before 8 a.m. Not willing to take things as they were, we took our packs and sat by the road, stopping every car we could. During the wait, we met two young backpackers from Jiangxi Province.

We waited together for hours. At about 2 p.m. we were overjoyed to stop an empty truck on its way back to Bayi Town, which charged us only 50 yuan each.

Another Uncomfortable Night

We were all in a good mood when we got on the vehicle. Standing on the open truck, we fully enjoyed the beautiful scenery of Bomi the snow-capped mountains, the green forest and blue waters. There was even a rainbow after the rain.

At about 7 p.m. our truck stopped in a long line of traffic because of road construction ahead. The Tibetan drivers all got out to make a fire for tea. We were also invited to join the eating and drinking. The sun began to set but there were no signs of any road clearance. We began to worry we might suffer that night too. The temperature dropped as dusk set in, so we simply couldn't leave the fire. Looking at the topless truck, we couldn't imagine how we could spend the night on its cold boards. Luckily the drivers started to work together to clear the rocks and after two hours our truck was able to get moving and reach Lulang Town 10 km away. We were saved for the night.

The town was fully packed because a landslide ahead of us had blocked the road for days. There were many trucks and drivers and the notels were full. We visited the hotels one by one but couldn't find any room available. Finally, we begged the waiters at the Lulang Hotel to let us sleep in the dining room. At least we were not out in the open. We put the sofas and wooden chairs together and spent a cold night on hard boards.

Tips: When travelling on the Sichuan-Tibet Highway, it is vital to take a light, padded down sleeping bag. Chances are one might have to sleep outside a hotel. In such an event, it is very upsetting to be without a sleeping bag and you might also catch a cold.

Climbing a Steep Mountainside

The cold woke me up early the next morning. I immediately went out into the street only to be told that two road builders had been crushed to death by huge rocks. Their bodies were still buried among the rocks and it was unlikely the road would be open to traffic. In the light of the casualties, our impatience evaporated. We calmed down and had to accept what had happened.

Lulang is a small town, but it provides good food and board for tourists, and has scenery as beautiful as Switzerland. It is no misfortune to stay here for some time as the town is surrounded by snow-capped mountains and grasslands.

The next morning we heard someone had walked from Bayi to Lulang, proving there was a way over the mountain that would bypass the disaster area. We all thought it was the only solution, so we begged the workers to clear some part of the road to let our truck return to the safe area. From there we could hike up the mountain.

With the agreement of the workers, we found a truck that set out right after it was loaded with passengers. In a howling cold wind it climbed along the muddy and dangerous mountain road. An hour later, we found ourselves midway up the mountain at over 4,000 m.

Dismounting from the truck, we couldn't see any path on the mountain. The Tibetans, grabbing roots exposed by the road bank, began to energetically clamber up the almost vertical slope. I felt bad as soon as we began climbing. My two bags hung heavily, one against my chest and the other on my back. As the mountainside was so steep, my legs bumped against my camera bag with every step and I just couldn't go fast enough. I hadn't experienced any high altitude sickness since coming to the plateau, but now I was out of breath. Every little move made me dizzy and gasp for oxygen.

I climbed slowly in a chaotic state of mind. Totally exhausted both physically and mentally, I sat on a rock; all my organs seemed to have stopped working. Then I heard the workers at the foot of the mountain shouting that dynamite was going to explode. It was dangerous to stay up on the mountain and we should get down. The "Three Cavaliers" gave me an ultimatum to speed up and the friends from Jiangxi also quickened their steps. I told them not to wait for me, and I would catch up after a break.

Timely Help from the Lamas

Seeing them disappearing one by one among the bushes, I suddenly felt extremely lonely and helpless. Tears came to my eyes. Then just before I collapsed, two lamas appeared and without a word they carried my packs and led me up the mountain. I was puzzled by their magical appearance but dared not say anything, nor dared to cry. I just followed them obediently.

When we reached the top and met the others, we had something to eat. It was only then I had a chance to express my gratitude to the monks and offered them all the food I had. But they refused it.

After regaining some strength, I retrieved my big backpack and continued the trek. Going down the mountain was not as physically demanding as getting up, but it was by no means less dangerous. With our heavy backpacks, we were prone to falling. So we all squatted down and slid down the slope, grabbing at roots. Luckily it was not raining. Otherwise what we were grasping might have become loose and we would have fallen down with it into the deep valley. At one narrow pass it was so dangerous we had to flatten ourselves against

1. Sheep's wool is one of the main income for herdsmen (by Wang Miao)
2. If you travel on northern Sichuan-Tibet route, you will pass the Qiangtang Grassland in Nagqu (by Wang Miao)
3. Two lamas were active in carrying luggage for the writer (by Song Wenjie)

FROM BOMI TO LHASA : WAITING FOR A RIDE

the hillside and go sideways, reminding me of the hair-raising plank road I walked at Mt. Huashan years ago. But this time it was much longer and more demanding.

We got lost several times on our way down the mountain, so the lamas and Mr. Song had to find the way. We half climbed and half slid down and in one and half hours reached the main road, completely covered with mud and brambles and looking like wild men.

It was already noon before we got to the road so we immediately went to look for transport to Bayi Town. Fortunately a van happened to heading back there after work, so all nine of us squeezed onto just five seats. Mr. Song and I sat at the back with some bags and suffered for three hours in very uncomfortable positions on the bumpy road, experiencing the last hard stage of the journey on the southern Sichuan-Tibet route.

Lhasa — the Destination

It was easy for us to get on the last bus of the day from Bayi to Lhasa. Sitting in the brand-new cross-country Desert Prince driving at a speed of over 100 km per hour on a good asphalt road was like having something familiar I had missed for a long time.

It must be mentioned we backpackers had all been to Lhasa before, but the "Three Cavaliers" still considered Lhasa their objective. Backpackers deem the course of a journey more important than the destination. The three of them were all solitary travellers before meeting up on the road. They had planned to go to Daocheng on this trip, but the road was blocked so they headed for Zhongdian. There was a landslide there too, so they went to Tibet again by taking the Sichuan-Tibet route where they met and shared this week-long journey with me. After our seven-day endurance test, we all found each other congenial company, sharing the same interests and ongoing hardships together. Such fine companionship could only happen by chance. (After returning to Hong Kong, I received a picture from Mr. Song. He wrote on the back: "Let's travel together if we have an opportunity.")

A City of Delicacies

At 11 p.m. we arrived in busy Barkor Street in Lhasa. There were so many tourists from other parts of China as well as from abroad they outnumbered the locals. For days I had been used to communicating heart-to-heart and we all shared the same straightforward, spontaneous sense of commitment. But now the faces before me were impenetrably cold and distant and I found it hard to adapt. I wish I was only being oversensitive.

As we walked along the street, a rainbow of neon signs met our eyes: Italian pizza, cafe, bar, ice cream parlour, Korean barbecue, Japanese grill, and of course restaurants in Sichuan, Chongqing, Guangdong, Yunnan flavours. There was even a Guizhou-style restaurant. It seems Lhasa will soon become one of the popular international metropolises for gourmets.

In addition to restaurants, the hotel business is also booming here. Among those that have already made their names, the Yag Hotel, the Tingri Hotel and the Banagxhol Hotel are always full and must be reserved in advance. Backpackers like us could only find our lodgings in a dark small lane. Conceivably in the near future Lhasa will become one of the hottest tourist spots in the world. It is inevitable and of course beneficial for it to open to the outside world. If tourism can bring stability and a better life for Tibetans, every tourist will gladly make a contribution to improve the local economy and education.

Reflections of the Tour

It was already one in the morning after getting everything down, before I could finally stretch myself out in a big soft bed. All that had happened in the past seven days flashed before me like a dream. I kept thinking what it meant to make such a dangerous trip as this. Is it really necessary when travelling to have traumatic experiences along with holiday relaxation? If we are only widening our horizons, obviously we can do that from magazines or travellers' stories. If relaxation is the object of the exercise then we may be left with just faint impressions of where we have been. If we have the chance of making a journey ourselves, even a tough one, it will be a valuable lesson in life.

Translated by L. Yu

Without taking the awful bus, I wouldn't have found out how optimistic and tenacious the Tibetans are;
Without experiencing the changeable climate on the plateau, I wouldn't know how physically limited a human being is;
Without being stranded on a bad road, I wouldn't have seen the strength of unity;
Without facing an imminent landslide, I wouldn't have realised how fragile life is;
Without meeting warm-hearted strangers along the way, I wouldn't believe the maxim that man's nature is fundamentally good

1. **The store has any food you want, burger, pizza, hot-dog, ice-cream, coffee, beer...**
2. **Looked down at Barkor Street from Jokhang Temple, you can see many tourists and pilgrims (by Xie Guanghui)**
3. **More and more lounges are set up especially for tourists (by Li Minxuan)**
4. **The foreign tourists enjoy the World Cup Football match in the bar of Lhasa (by Xie Guanghui)**
5. **Artistic and modern cafés can be seen everywhere in Lhasa**

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A PRIZED HORSERACE GATHERING IN YUSHU

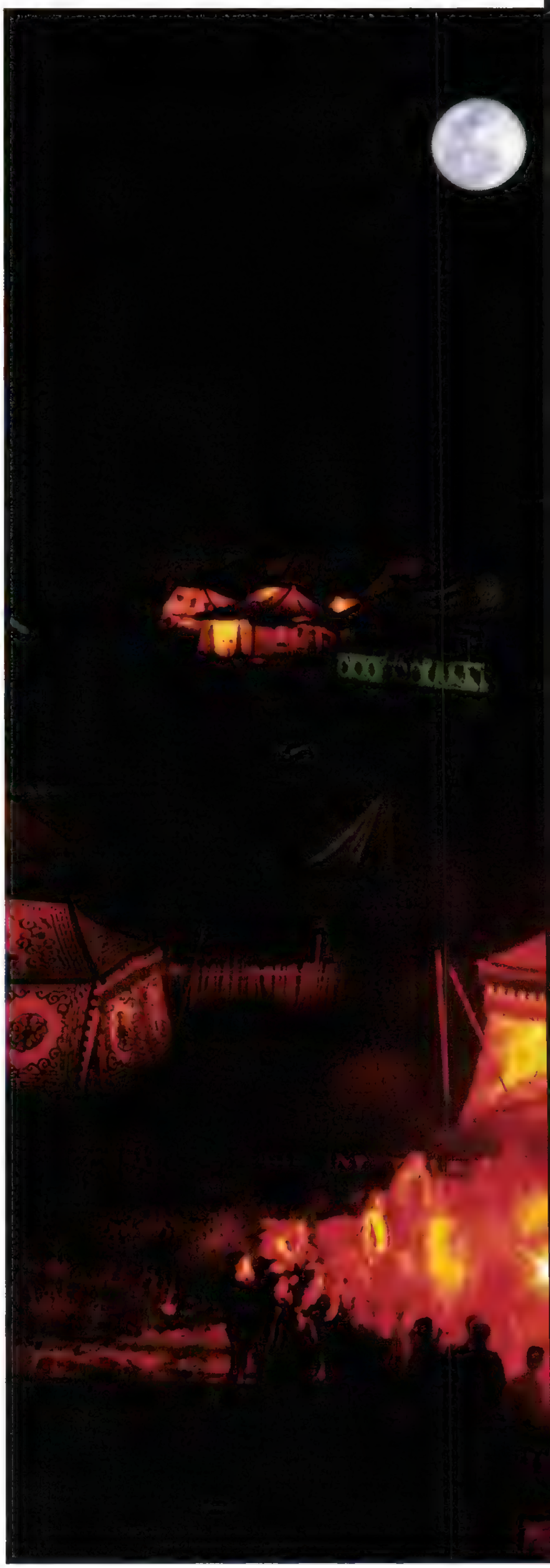
Photos & article by Dianna Lau

The five days from July 25 to 29 each year are important to Gyegu Town in Yushu Prefecture. Tibetan people in their beautiful clothes take automobiles, motorbikes and minibuses of different sizes, in an endless stream on the highways. They travel to the Bkrashikha Grasslands several kilometres away from the town, to take part in the horse races once a year.

Widely Celebrated Gathering

The horse race gatherings were originally ceremonial occasions for tribal leaders to welcome distinguished guests or for wedding celebrations. The shepherds loved to ride horses, and as the ceremonies' central theme was Tibetan-style horse racing, so the gatherings as such have come to be known as

1. A richly dressed lama blows a silver horn at the opening ceremony of the horse races (by Li Minxuan)
2. Tibetan women serve local cuisine to tourists (by Xie Guanghui)
3. The brilliant bonfire party on the grassland (by Qin Shuguang)



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A PRIZED HORSERACE GATHERING IN YUSHU

horse race gatherings. Besides traditional horse races, yak races, singing, dancing and other activities, the programmes nowadays also include tugs-of-war, weight lifting, Tibetan dramatic performances, and recitals of the King Gesar stories. The gathering venues have also become markets for business people to sell their local specialties.

Walking into the gathering, one can see an array of tents newly erected on the vast grassland to accommodate Tibetans travelling from all over the place. These people usually arrive before the gathering opens, and stay on the prairie until the end of the celebrations.

Horse Races Contests of Skill

The events at the gathering last for five days. The first day features the opening ceremony, the second day the horse racing, the third singing and dancing performances, the fourth day tugs-of-war, weight lifting and yak racing, and the fifth day the Tibetan plays, massed singing and dancing and then the closing ceremony.

One of the horse events involves intensely competitive races. Riders on horseback chase each

other like flying arrows. Dust clouds rise before the eyes, and the shouts are deafening. They really are an experience to see. The most thrilling, however, showcase "horseback skills". These players have to perform all kinds of difficult feats while on horseback, the best known of which is "picking up the hada". With their excellent skills, the riders lean down from their horses' backs, plucking the hada from the ground. Any mistake means failure. Other performances include "shooting from horseback", "horseback acrobatics" and so on. All the riders who win first places in these matches gain the greatest honours and respect, and are admired by the girls.

Yak Matches For Fun

There are many yaks on this plateau. The shepherds rely on yaks in their daily grazing and for transport. So they pay much attention to becoming skilled at riding yaks. Yak matches are a must at the horse race gatherings in the Yushu and Golog areas.

As the saying goes among the shepherds, "Horse racing displays skills, but yak matches are for fun." Yaks are wild and not easily tamed. Moreover, they have a much poorer sense of direction. Left alone they follow no set routines. So whenever there are contests in the offing, the trainers must focus on improving the yaks' sense of direction, ability to change speed, and adaptability to new situations.

Yak matches are uncomplicated affairs; the yaks taking part are merely required to race along a 200-metre track, and the fastest wins. The yaks waiting at the starting point have been carefully brushed, with red flowers hanging on their foreheads, strands of red silk tied to their horns, and colourful bands on their tails. They don't usually look so beautiful.

Before a formal match there is usually a pre-race, so the yaks get used to the conditions at the venue and umpires and audience can have a look at the general state of the yaks. Although the match has already been underway some time, the yaks are slow to get into the starting position.

Then suddenly, bang! A line of yaks and riders takes off, raising clouds of dust. In the confusion, two contestants are thrown off. Lying on the ground they helplessly gaze at their own yaks running away.

1. Unique Tibetan dancing
2. Winners of the horse-racing highlight, picking up the *hada*, are regaled as heroes (by Li Minxuan)
3. Carrying a heavy sandbag (100 kg-plus) is one of the contests
4. Unpredictable yak races are often held in Yushu and Golog in Qinghai Province, and provide much amusement

A PRIZED HORSERACE GATHERING IN YUSHU

Handsome Lads and Pretty Girls

At the gatherings lasting several days, the most thrilling event is surely the dancing performances. Every dancer conveys something of the plateau's ancient simple character, through his dress, dancing skills or even his facial expressions. Whenever the music starts, dozens of energetic performers enter the stage, moving in time to the rhythm. Their long colourful sleeves stir up the dust, and each dancer, bold and vigorous, is totally absorbed. As the tempo speeds up, the atmosphere at the whole site becomes infectious. The audience waves in time to the sound of the copper bells on the Tibetan men's leather boots, and people feel a surge of emotion. A woman tourist beside me became so excited she burst into tears. This is an indication how moving it was.

Visiting Tents

On the grasslands, another way to make friends is to visit one by one the families dwelling in tents. This is known as "visiting tents." The shepherds who have lived in the wide open spaces for a long time,

have few opportunities to meet people from other places. Therefore they are especially hospitable to strangers, always taking you as distinguished guests. They will invite you to eat, drink and talk together with them: first, to drink some cups of buttered tea, then eat all kinds of cakes, beef and mutton with your hands, stuffed intestines, steamed stuffed buns, roasted barley flour, sour milk and so on. Liquor is a must, of course.

If you are still interested, you may well wait until the evening to take part in the different campfire dances spontaneously performed by the shepherds. Fires burn slowly in the darkness of night, handsome lads and beautiful lasses begin to dance again to the wild sound of drums. One could almost have returned to ancient times.

A Young Girl who Moved Me

It suddenly began to rain that night during the campfire dancing and the shepherds left disappointed. Without hesitation, the young Tibetan girl who had accompanied me to watch the performances rushed home to fetch an umbrella. Twenty minutes later, the young sister reappeared before me, wet to the skin, with an umbrella in her hand. She gasped to me: "You may go home now." Then we walked back, holding each other's arm. In the heavy rain, in the endless darkness of the plateau it was really difficult to find the way. The young sister left the umbrella with me, running forward alone to find the way. I felt my eyes wet, not knowing if it was rain or tears.

By the time we located her family's tent, both of us were wet through. The girl, however, hastily found a large piece of towel for me. I will always remember that small face, considerate and gentle.

1. The grand horse-racing festival is not only held at Yushu in Qinghai but also on the Shiqu Grassland in Sichuan in early August
2. Local spectators are the targets of photographers
3. Beautifully dressed little girls pose willingly
4. The dancers throw themselves into the performance

THE MAZE OF 2.5 BILLION MANI STONES

Photos & article by Dianna Lau

Mani stones are a special sculptural art in Tibetan areas with strong religious and aesthetic overtones. In Tibet, these stones can be found along roads, in mountains, on riverbanks and even in burial grounds. On the stones are usually sculpted Buddhist images or Buddhist scriptures, mainly a "Six-character Mantra" (Ong , Ma, Ni, Ba, Mi, Hong). Some stones retain their original forms; others are painted with bright colours. Both the sculpture skills and colours are finely wrought. The Tibetan people like to collect tne stones, forming Mani Piles of different shapes and sizes. The Mani piles in Yushu, Baima and Zêkog of Qinghai Province are especially large, and the sculptures are also unique.

Museum of Mani Stones.

As our tourist coach arrived at Xinzhai Village, five kilometres from Gyegu Town in Yushu, an enormous "stone maze" came into signt. On closer inspection, I found it was built entirely of Mani stones all fully sculptured with Buddhist scriptures, forming a three metre high outer wall. This was the most famous Mani pile in the Tibetan area. According to the *Records of Jiana Mani*, these piles have a history of over 400 years, and were accumulated on the advice of a person named Jiana Duoding. As time passed the pile became larger and larger. One estimate puts more than 2.5 billion Mani stones here, covering an area about a hundred metres from west to east and about 40 metres from north to south. It is truly a museum of Mani stones.

Rock Sculptures in Leba Valley

The Leba Valley is one of the most beautiful places I had ever seen. Its natural scenery is inspiring, and one feels especially at ease strolling there. Along the way streams meander through the valley, all sparkling with clean water. It had been more than a thousand years since Princess Wencheng passed through here, yet the valley one sees still retains the same purity and freshness. It is indeed a wonderland.

Apart from the natural scenery, this place is most famous for its rock sculptures, all undertaken at the order of Princess Wencheng. Quite apart from the elegance and delicacy, the scale of the project is astounding. Climbing up along the paths in the mountains, the first things to catch the eye are the Mani stones that had been in the streams for years and years. This was the first time I had seen Mani stones in water. The marks of erosion by the water prove they had been immersed for a long time. All through the wild fields and mountains stones of all sizes along the paths were also fully inscribed with scriptures. Looking upward, I saw enormous rock sculptures even on the steep cliffs on the top of the mountains. I could hardly imagine how the workers had climbed up there to complete their wonderful work. Someone told me the clever craftsmen put handfuls of fresh cow dung on the cliffs. When the dung froze on the rocks, foot and handholds were available. Then the workers climbed up the cliffs to accomplish their masterpieces.

Visiting the Temple of Princess Wencheng

After Princess Wencheng, Princess Jincheng also married into Tibetan society to cement the relationship between the Tang Dynasty and Tibetan rulers. Just like Princess Wencheng, she passed through the Leba Valley, finding nine Buddha figures reportedly sculpted on the order of Princess Wencheng. To preserve the memory of Princess Wencheng, Jincheng had temples built to protect the sculptures, and named the buildings the Temple of Princess Wencheng. This happened more than 1,500 years ago.

Over a thousand years ago a weak woman from rich middle China marrying into a poor unfamiliar plateau would have needed great courage. Her contribution to the interaction between Buddhism and lay cultures also won respect.

1. These colourful Mani stones have been heaped up for more than 400 years (by Lin Jinghua)
2. Mani stones abound in Leba Valley
3. Striking cliff paintings in Leba Valley
4. A Mani stone decorated with Buddhist symbols
5. Jiana Mani with its 2.5 billion Mani stones, ranks second to the Potala Palace as a Tibetan pilgrimage site (by Lin Jinghua)

TRAVELLING WITH A "LIVING BUDDHA"

Photos & article by Dianna Lau

Thanks to Hong Xing, I had the honour to meet Rin-po-che Lozhoi Nyi'ma who offered me a lift to Dêgê County in Sichuan to take part in the opening ceremony of the Chos-grags Monastery in Lingduo Township. (Rin-po-che is a name Tibetan Buddhists give to a Living Buddha, which means a samsara master). We spent two happy days together in Changu Monastery at Gyegu town.

Faith Rooted in Life

At seven o'clock in the morning, the Rin-po-che's 4WD vehicle stopped at the hotel gate on time. Nervously I climbed aboard, only to find him sitting inside smiling. Two of his disciples were also in the car, mainly to drive and deal with various affairs.

"Good morning!" we greeted each other. Rin-po-che Lozhoi spoke English better than Chinese. He explained he had little opportunity for formal education in his hometown when he was young. Instead he mastered English during the nine years he studied in India and Nepal. After he returned to China he began to learn Chinese. We talked in a mixture of Chinese and English.

Travelling in the same car as the Rin-po-che, I experienced the Tibetan people's profound respect for their religious leaders. Every time Tibetan people noticed the Rin-po-che in the vehicle, they naturally stopped to bow. We travelled easily all the way, greatly respected, just like VIPs. I'm only an ordinary woman but this treatment massaged my ego for a long time.

We drove into a wild grassland with no trace of human life. But our car kept blowing its horn. Not knowing what was happening, I looked outside, only to see lots of small holes throughout the meadows. The field mice living in the holes were heedless of cars. Because of the Buddhist respect for all life, the monk who drove us had to be extra cautious in case the innocent creatures got hurt. This virtuous behaviour impressed me deeply.

Fanciful Thought About Yogas

At eight we arrived at the Liangduo Township, deep in the shadow of the mountains. Rin-po-che Namzhi came out to meet us by himself. After exchanging hada with Rin-po-che Lozhoi, Namzhi led us to his house for tea, then accompanied us on a visit to the Chos-grags Monastery which would be opened to the public the next day. The monastery is said to comprise both sutra and meditation houses, where the meditation practices of the two schools of the White Sector of Lamaism still continue. The meditation house can hold more than 40 people at one time, and a meditation period lasts 39 months. I had long been aware of the mysterious Lamaist practices, the most impressive of which is surely a practising Lamaist's ability to produce heat from his body. It is warm enough to dry a piece of wet carpet, or even prevent snow accumulating on the roof where he meditates all year. When I looked inside the meditation house, I wondered if the heat generated from more than 40 lamaists meditating simultaneously could be converted into storable energy to directly benefit people.

"Living Buddha" Loved to Watch World Cup

Next morning, Rin-po-che Lozhoi showed me around for half a day. Under his guidance, I visited an ancient temple in the village, and was fortunate to have a look at precious Thang-ga and murals. Then we visited some local senior monks at their homes. The Rin-po-che always accompanied me closely so he could explain what we saw. That completely dispelled my earlier prejudice that Tibetan Buddhism looked down on women.

Before the opening ceremony, the Rin-po-che, his two disciples and I lazed on sofas and chatted casually. The Rin-po-che told me he had a fixation with the clothes lamas wore when he was still a child. Seeing this, his mother began to teach him about Buddhism, and later even sent him to India and Nepal to study Buddhism. There a senior master recognised him as a samsara Rin-po-che. After that, he returned to China, studied hard for 39 months, then went to Beijing for further study. He returned to Qinghai Province last year after graduation, taking charge of the Temple of Chango Monastery. For the time being he was engaged in enlarging the temple.

As soon as I set foot in a monastery, I realised it was not easy to run one. The pressure was absolutely no less intense than managing a large institution. I could not help asking him: "Do you, a Living Buddha, lose your temper because of work?" He made a face like a child: "I do feel annoyed when the work doesn't go smoothly, but problems need to be rationally solved after all."

While we were chatting, the Rin-po-che was afraid I was hungry,

so ceaselessly plied me with all kinds of Tibetan refreshments, and I accepted them without any hesitation. Astonished, he asked me: "Do you eat everything?" This time it was my turn to laugh: "I try my best to respect other peoples' culture." He smiled. To pass the time, I taught them to play cards, sketched them, and demonstrated cameras to the Rin-po-che. He liked my 18~35 mm wide-angled camera, handling it admiringly. When talking about the current World Cup, the Rin-po-che told me he supported Argentina but it was a pity the team had not played well. Eventually, I played a palmistry game for them, saying the Rin-po-che would have many children if he got married, and that his disciples were all stubborn but devoted... All three laughed at my remarks. I liked the monks very much.

Bustling Opening Ceremony

Honoured guests arrived one by one that afternoon, all the shepherds in their best clothes lining up to warmly welcome them. Among the guests were the head of Dêgê County, the monastery's benefactors from other places and a group of hierarchal monks. A succession of travel-stained 4WD vehicles, imposing horses and colourful motorbikes arrived. It was almost boisterous.

When all the hierarchal monks gathered at the monastery gate, the formal ribbon-cutting ceremony began. Then they went into the hall to recite scriptures, while outside the hall other monks also recited scriptures and believers came to make devotions or offerings. After the recitations, the Tibetan people left one by one, while the monastery had prepared singing and dancing performances for the guests. There was abundant food and accommodation tents, of course.

As soon as the ceremony was over, the Rin-po-che Lozhoi left quickly. Before his departure, he repeatedly asked Rin-po-che Namzhi to find the best vehicle to take me to the Dêgê county seat. When he heard my destination was Lhasa, he suggested I stay at his uncle's house there, explaining there was a beautiful garden nearby. Finally, he invited me to take part in the opening ceremony of his monastery in Yushu the next year, and stay in his house on that occasion.

Thanks to my two days with the Rin-po-che, I had profoundly realized the "Living Buddha" was as human as a commoner but even more considerate, warmhearted and joyful.

Translated by Huang Deyuan

1. A motorbike decorated for the temple's Opening Light Ceremony
2. Even a "Living Buddha" faces the same problems as ordinary people
3. Running a monastery is no less a task than managing a large institution
4. Lamas visit Chos-grags Monastery in Langduo County to take part in the Opening Light Ceremony
5. The Living Buddha Lozhoi Nyi'ma is the abbot of the ancient Changu Monastery in Yushu

TRAVEL TIPS

The following information are based on writer's exeperience

Flight : Shenzhen → Xining (Halt in Xi'an), twice a week.
Single ticket: 1,570 yuan Time: 2 hours and 50 minutes

Guangzhou → Xining,: Three flights a week.
Single ticket: 1,370 yuan Time: 2 hours and 50 minutes

Bus : Xining → Tar Monastery (25 km), take mini-bus from Xining City gymnasium.
Fare: 20 yuan Time: 30 minutes

Xining → Yushu (over 820 km), two shifts of sleeper coaches everyday from Xining and Gyegu Town.
Fare: 94-137 yuan Time: one day

Dêgê countyseat → Qamda (110 km), once a day. Fare: 35 yuan Time: 4 hours

Qamda → Qamdo (228 km), one bus the other day. Fare: 70 yuan Time: 14 hours

Qamdo → Bomi (485 km), setting out every Monday and Thursday. Fare: 120 yuan Time: two days

Qamdo → Lhasa (1,121 km), setting out every Tuesday and Friday. Fare 240 yuan Time: four days

Note : The Qamdo-Lhasa bus may travel along the southern line or the northern line of Sichuan-Tibet highway, which is up to drivers in accordance to road conditions. The scenes are splendid along the southern line but the road conditions are not steady, while the northern line is less attractive but safer.

Bomi → Bayi (233 km), cross-country vehicles available on roads at 8 every morning.
Fare: 100 yuan per person Time: 12 hours

Bayi → Lhasa (406 km), several buses a day. Fare: 80~100 yuan Time: 5 hours

Accommodation : Xining City — Qilianshan Hotel, safe and clean
Bed : 15~20 yuan (public lavatory); single/standard room: 90/118 yuan (with bathroom)

Gyegu Town — Heping Hostel (opposite to the bus station), safe, hospitable, but with lower sanitary standard. Bed: 20 yuan (public lavatory)

Dege Countysite of Sichuan Province — Que'ershan Hotel ★★★ standard room: 100 yuan (with bathroom) in slack seasons. Bed: 38 yuan (public lavatory)

Jiangda of Tibet — Bus Station Hostel, 6~25 yuan for double to ten-beds rooms (public lavatory), 50 yuan for single room (public lavatory)

Qamdo — Bus Station Hostel, Bed/single room: 10/50 yuan at minimum (public lavatory: with public bathroom inside the station)

Bomi — Bomi Hostel and Jiaotong Hostel, Bed: 15 yuan at minimum (public lavatory)

Bayi — Jinrong Hotel, convenient location. Standard room: 30 yuan (public lavatory)

Lhasa — Bkrashis Darrgyas Hotel, near Jokhang Temple, convenient location, with enough vacant rooms. Bed: 35 yuan at minimum (public lavatory and bathroom); double room: 150 yuan (with bathroom)

Admission : Tar Monastery of Qinghai Province, 30 yuan, open from 08:30~18:00

Internet Houses : Dêgê (beside Sutra-printing temple); Qamda Town (main street); Qamdo (near Changqing Street); Bomi (main street); Bayi (near a post office); Lhasa (in streets and common hotels). Prices for reference: 4~8 yuan per hour;

Qinghai Lake in Xining

Tibetan in Maqiganggo of Sichuan

Lhoba nationality of Nyingchi of Tibet

Maqua Grassland in Qinghai

Margyimiyar Restaurant in Lhasa

Special Permission to Tibet :

I visited department director Jigme of Tourism Bureau, reporting to him the Travel Permit to Tibet problem involved when Hong Kong and Macao people went to Tibet. He told me they were speeding up the approval process and pertinent administration. Before the measures effected, as he advised, it is reliable to obtain the Travel Permit to Tibet in advance in case some custom officers deal with matters in different ways. Many other Hong Kong tourists had also inquired him of this question through telephone calls in Qinghai Province in July and August, and he had then told inspectors along the Tibetan Road not to examine the permits of Hong Kong and Macao people, so that they could enter Tibet easily. Our magazine has reported it before and will pay attention to its newest development in reference to various experiences of different tourists and especially to the most confusing situation at the entrances from Chengdu of Sichuan Province into Tibet.

People from Taiwan and other countries still need the Travel Permit before they enter Tibet.

Suggested Itinerary :

(1) Two days more : Sightseeing famous scene within the urban area, buses can reach both large and small scenic spots, including Potala Palace, Jokhang Monastery, Drepung Monastery, Norbuglinkha and Bar-skor Street.

(2) Four days more : Taking a bus from Lhasa urban area to the Samye Monastery, Qingpu Mountains, Yumbu Lakang, Chamzhu Temple and other places in Shannan Prefecture.

(3) Four days or over four days more : Taking a contracted coach from Lhasa to Xigazê, Qomolangma Base Camp, Lake Namco and other places; going ahead from Zhangmu to Nepal if time is available.

(4) Ten days more : Taking a bus from Lhasa urban area to Nyingchi Prefecture, then finding to a guide to enter Mêdog County where is not accessible by automobiles.

(5) Fourteen days more : Taking a contracted vehicle from Lhasa to Ngari Prefecture in the western Tibet.

Transportation (depart from Lhasa) :

Sleeping car : To Golmud City, Qinghai Province (one or more buses a day,fare: 210/230 yuan for upper berth and lower berth), 1,164 km, about 24 hours

Flights : The following information is effective from late March each year to the late October the next year.

To Chengdu — available everyday; price: 1,270 yuan or so, 3 hours

To Chongqing — Every Wednesday, price: 1,450 yuan or so, 2 hours and 10 minutes

To Xining — Every Thursday, price: 1,440 yuan or so, 2 hours

To Beijing — Twice a week, price: 2,090 yuan or so, 5 hours and 40 minutes

To Xi'an — Every Thursday, price: 1,470 yuan or so, 3 hours and 30 minutes

To Shanghai — Twice a week, price: 2,360 yuan or so, 6 hours and 40 minutes

To Guangzhou — Once a week, price: 1,640 yuan, 4 hours and 20 minutes

To Hong Kong — Once a week, price: HK$3,680, 5 hours and 30 minutes (only available in summer)

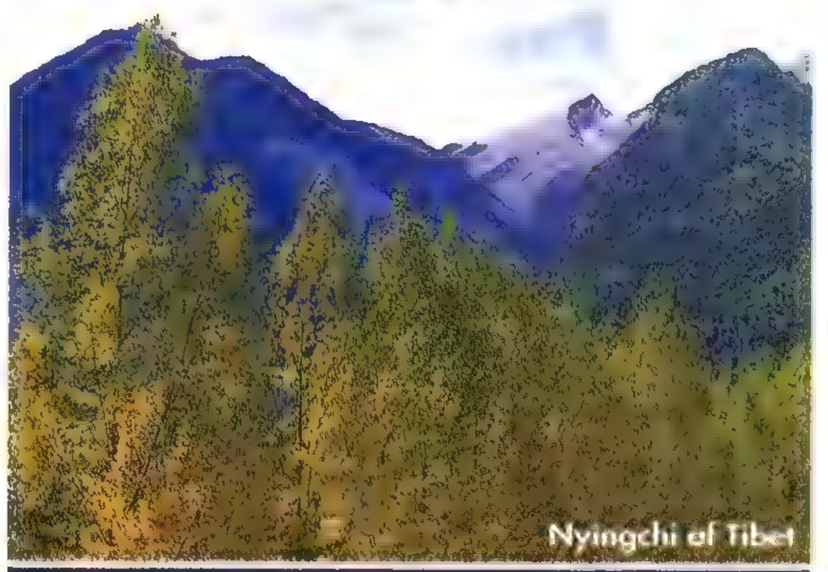
To Kathmandu — Once a week, price: RMB 2,290 yuan, 1 hour and 10 minutes

(Flight tickets query , you may call the tourist section of our magazine at 2516 9228.)

Jokhang Temple in Lhasa

Yumbu Lakang Palace in Shannan of Tibet

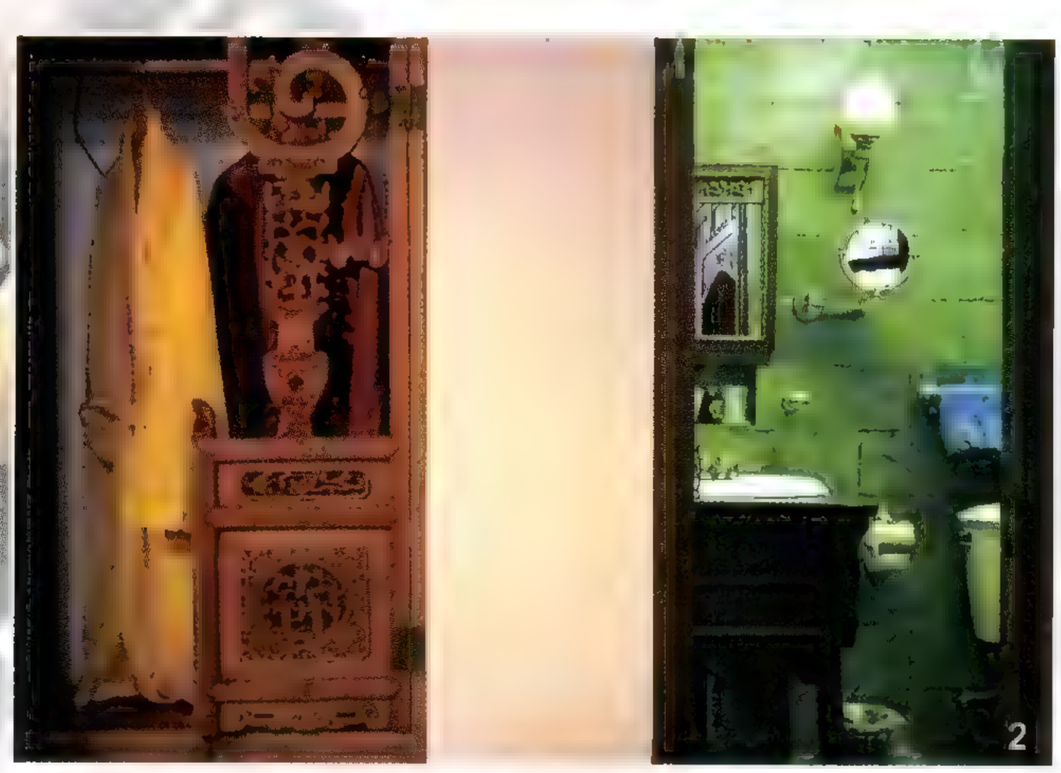
Nam Co at Temple of Tibet


Nyingchi of Tibet

Ngari Plateau of Tibet

SWEET DREAMS IN RED MANSIONS

Photos & article by Dianna Lau



These days five-star hotels throughout the world seem to have been built more or less according to the same blueprint. What difference is there between those in Hong Kong, Beijing or New York? So when I arrived in Beijing and heard about a classic courtyard-style hotel, I hired a taxi to take me directly to this unique retreat hidden deep in a small lane.

Standing in front of No. 9 Dongxi Liutiao Lane, I could see no sign indicating a hotel and began to doubt I had come to the right place. The rather magnificent wall surrounding the house however told me this was no ordinary residence. So I called someone to check it out and was told: "Yes, you are at the right place. Just press the door bell."

As soon as I pressed the small doorbell button, I heard a burst of birdsong and the two heavy doors were opened from the inside. A smiling waitress in a traditional Chinese dress, *qipao*, ushered me inside, saying: "Please come in."

The Red Capital Residence

Quadrangle houses in Beijing traditionally embrace several courtyards, with one leading to another. The number of courtyards depended on the owner's status, taste and the location of the property.

The Red Capital Residence I visited belongs to the most elementary type with just one courtyard. Turning at the screen wall facing the door, I came to the middle of a small courtyard with apartments on all four sides. The sun was high, brightening the courtyard. The doors and windows of the rooms all open on to txhe courtyard, their backs completely windowless. Small but elegant, the entire place has only five guestrooms. A restaurant and bar is on the southern side of the courtyard. It faces the main guestroom now named "The Chairman's Suite" across the courtyard. Two adjoining rooms, one on either side of "The Chairman's Suite", are called "Concubine of the West" and "Concubine of the East". The two rooms on the east and west sides of the central courtyard are named "Edgar Snow Suite" and "Han Suyin Suite".

The guesthouse was officially opened in July last year. Originally it was a private residence for one of the veterans who helped establish the People's Republic of China. American hotel owner Laurence Brahm bought the house and spent no less than two years restoring the small courtyard to its original glory. Every beam and pillar was

1. The quadrangle house is an ideal place for relaxation over a cup of tea
2. The classic-style room features both traditional furniture and modern bathroom facilities
3. The old lamp and telephone in the Han Suyin Suite are not purely decorative, they do work
4. The Red Capital Residence without a sign successfully creates a sense of mystery

renovated by artisans who had worked on the repair and maintenance of buildings in the Palace Museum, Prince Gong's Residence and the Summer Palace.

Every piece of furniture and all decorative objects in the various rooms of the guesthouse are from his personal collection. The pieces date from the Ming-Qing periods through to the 1950s and 60s. They are a clear indication of the taste of the guesthouse's owner.

Five Rooms, Five Tastes

The five guestrooms are all uniquely furnished illustrating different aspects of Chinese history. After checking in, I wandered about the inn, visiting every room. In the Chairman's Suite, I found an exceptionally large bed. Part of it supported a row of bookshelves packed with books Chairman Mao most loved to read including *The Mirror of Government*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Outlaws of the Marsh*. The bed, the books, the sofas, coffee table and overhead lamp used in the 1960s create an atmosphere for the visitor of discussing state affairs with the Chairman.

The east and west suites, the Edgar Snow Suite and Han Suyin Suite, were respectively named after two authors whose lives have had close ties with late Chinese leaders. Not only their works decorate the rooms, but also old-fashioned typewriters, oil lamps and writing desks, as if telling moving stories.

The "Concubine of the East" and the "Concubine of the West", furnished in Ming and Qing styles, present the visitor with an ambience of elegance and simple warmth. I picked one of these rooms for my stay.

In front of the "Concubine of the West" stands a stone lion carved during the Ming Dynasty in Shanxi Province. Entering the room, I was greeted by one happy surprise after another. The overhead lantern was a real treasure, hand-painted to symbolise wealth and good fortune and used by really rich Shanxi people in the late Qing Dynasty. Against the wall were two chairs from the Ming Dynasty while the big maroon sofa was once owned by foreign ambassadors in the 1950s. The most striking item was a massive carved wooden Qing Dynasty bed. The patterns of grapes and gourds on the bed frame were symbols of a big family. The entire room was simply like a museum.

1

After settling in, I returned to the courtyard. The graceful trunk and foliage of a more than 300-year-old date palm is the main feature here. Next to it were typical Chinese garden rocks, which were not just decorative but served to mask the entrance to an air-raid shelter. This has now been converted to a wine cellar and a bar. In the dark space were many souvenirs of the Cultural Revolution era such as Red Guard armbands, caps and bags. A corner is reserved to show old movies. Many visitors, I learned, came specially not to stay in the guestrooms but to have a glass of wine, enjoy a cigar and watch old movies.

Savouring Delicacies in the Club

As I sat, wandered around, looked about and talked with people, time slipped by and before I knew it, dinnertime was nigh. The guesthouse provides rickshaws to take guests to the club several blocks up on Dongsi Jiutiao Lane (as the Beijingers call "hutong"). This club turned out be another quadrangle house more than two hundred years old. At one time, it was a place for secret liaisons during the period of "Manchukuo" (1932—1945, Japanese puppet regime in Northeast China).

The club offers visitors a special cuisine and cigars. Entering the courtyard, I was immediately struck by the busy atmosphere. The clientele was half foreign and half

2

Chinese. Some chose to eat inside the classic rooms, while others preferred the spacious garden. Either way, they could enjoy a candlelit meal accompanied by pleasant music.

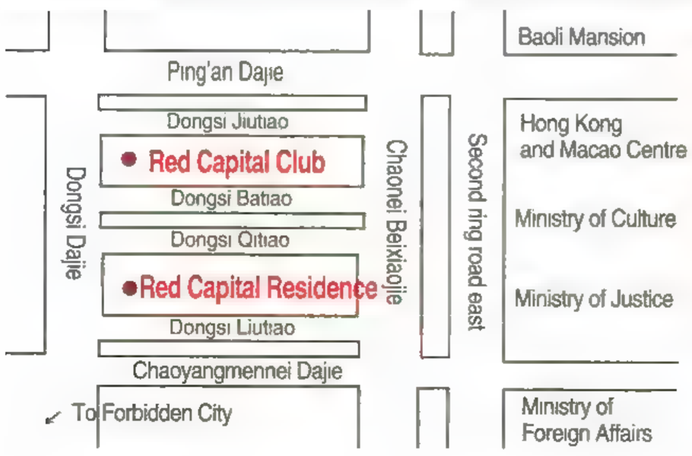
The chefs once worked in the "Forbidden City" nowadays known as Zhongnanhai (Central and South Seas) where the Chinese Government has its offices. Naturally they were good at creating authentic "Zhongnan" food which is the biggest attraction for diners.

The "Zhongnan" dishes are also known as State Banquet dishes. To put it simply, these are home-cooked recipes the old generation of Chinese leaders liked. Deng Xiaoping loved shredded eel stir-fried with red chilies; Yang Shangkun, the president of China in the early 1990s, favoured sour and spicy bean curd and Liu Shaoqi, president of China in the 1960s, fancied quick stir-fried beef slices, just to cite a few examples. Apart from these, the chefs have also added traditional court dishes to the menu to satisfy an increasing demand for gourmet food. Each item on the menu is explained with a brief history cleverly bringing the cuisine culture alive, making eating here such a great pleasure and fun.

I ordered the extremely elegant "Chairman's Balsom Pear" (25 yuan), and the "Palace Lantern Shrimps" (48 yuan) with an interesting story of how the dish was created. I followed this with "Deng Xiaoping's Green Sichuan Chicken" (68 yuan) which was spiced to the right degree, the classic "Dream of the Red Mansions Eggplant with Turtle" (88 yuan) and the well-cooked meat soup with red wine. I found all the dishes simply delicious. Apart from the taste, the dish was meticulously presented. The food, quality service and the entire atmosphere made the meal totally worth the price. No wonder the restaurant has been listed among the "Best 60 in the World".

4

1. Guests are usually very careful when sleeping on this large bed from the Qing Dynasty, in case they damage the treasured antique
2. The cigar bar in the Red Capital Club is as comfortable as one's own living room.
3. To have a "Zhongnan" meal in a quadrangle house restaurant provides a taste of authentic Beijing life
4. The scrumptious "Zhongnan" dishes: "Chairman's Balsom Pear" (top), "Palace Lantern Shrimps" (middle), "Deng Xiaoping's Green Sichuan Chicken" (bottom)

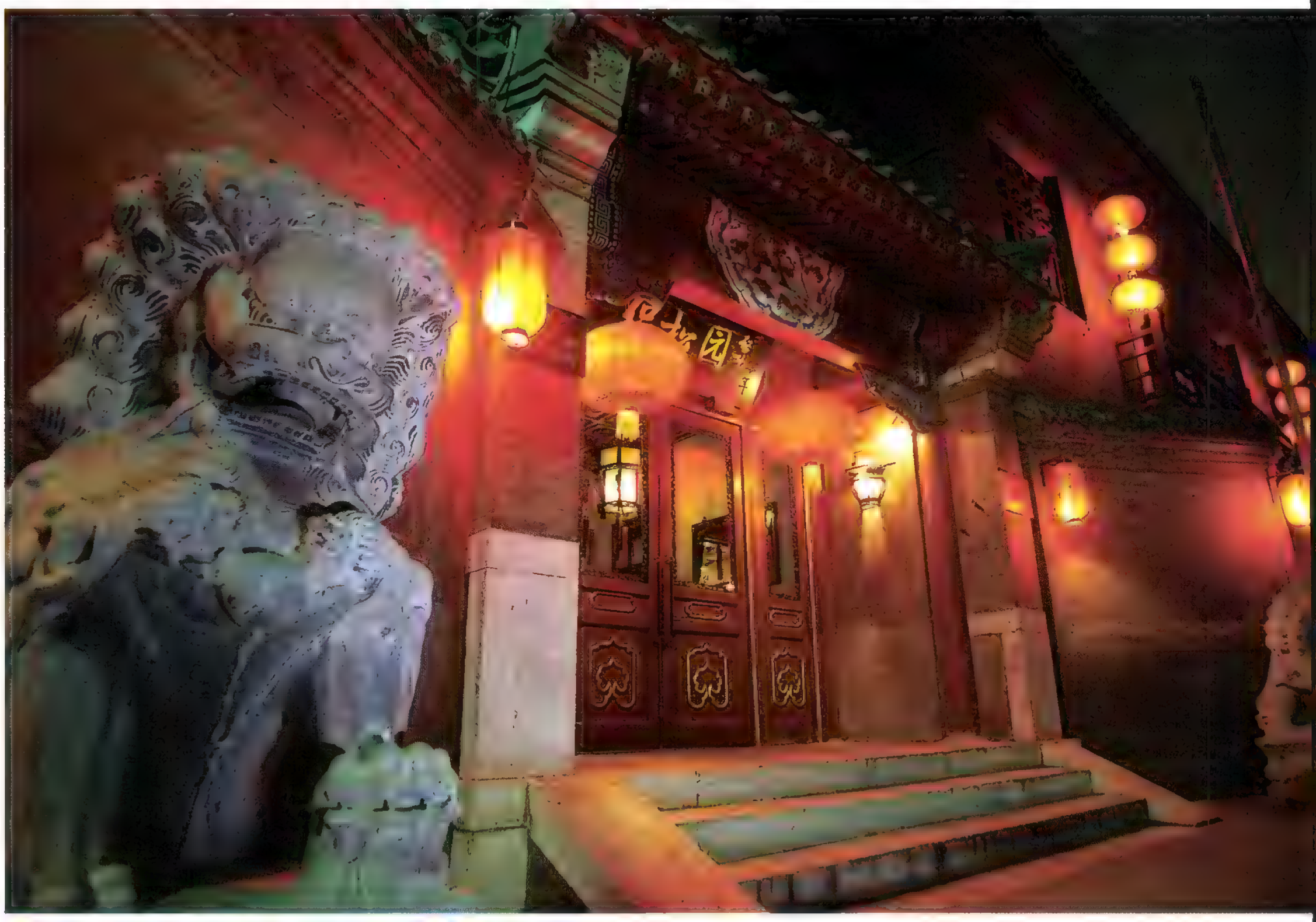


Red Capital Residence

- **Add:** 9 Sixth Dongsi Lane East, Dongcheng District, Beijing
- **Telephone:** (10) 8403 5308
- **Reservation:** (10) 6402 7150
- **Fax:** (10) 8403 5303
- **Rate (including breakfast):** The Chairman's Suite, the Concubine of the East and West: US $148/ night; the Edgar Snow Suite and Han Suyin Suite: US $100/ night.

Red Capital Club

- **Add:** 66 Ninth Dongsi Lane East, Dongcheng District, Beijing
- **Reservation:** (10) 6402 7150
- **Fax:** (10) 6402 7153
- **Business hours:** 6~11 p.m. (closed on Mondays)
- **Website:** www.redcapitalclub.com.cn
- **Average cost per dinner:** 150~200 yuan

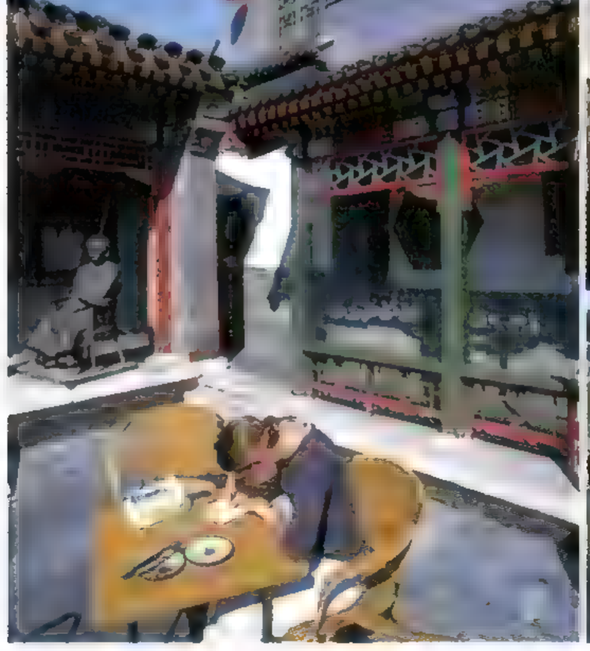


Lusongyuan Hotel — A Prince's Residence

Photos & article by Zhu Jianhui

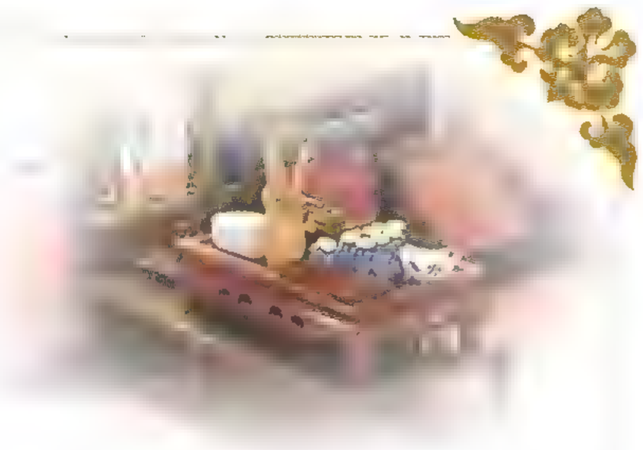
One important reason for touring is to get the feel of lifestyles and customs. By using local accommodation the visitor experiences different cultural backgrounds. In Mongolia, for example, you must stay in a Mongolian yurt. In Xishuangbanna, a tropical region in Yunnan, you should try the bamboo bungalows of the Dai people. In northern Shaanxi, you will surely want to spend a night or two in a cave dwelling. And in Beijing, you should pick a quadrangle house for your stay.

Most of the well-preserved quadrangle houses in Beijing today were once residences of princes and dukes or famous society people. The majority are not open to the public. And of those which are open, few show traces of individuality. Visitors usually make a quick tour treating them like a museum. To live in one is almost unimaginable.

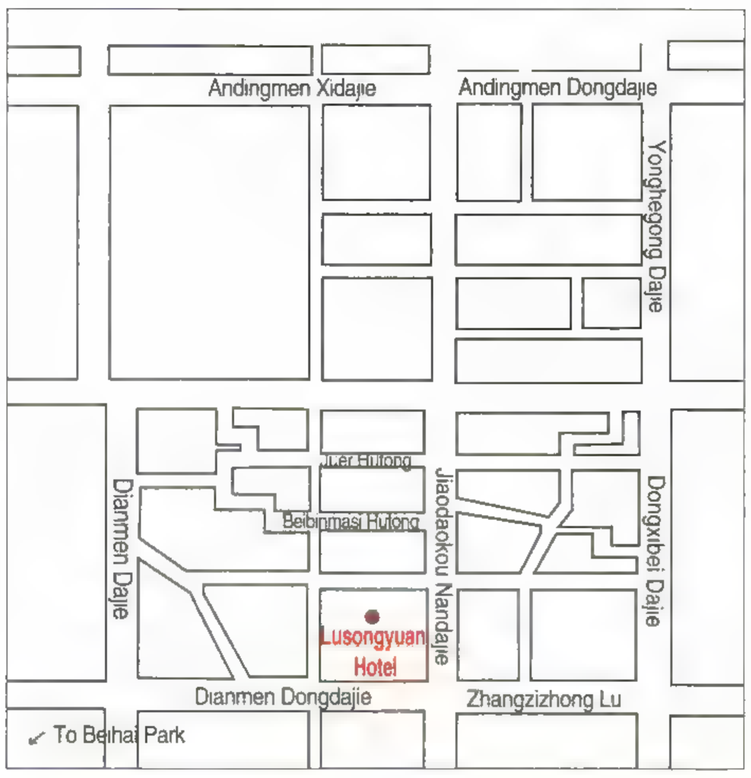


In Banchang Hutong on Kuanjie in Beijing's Dongcheng District, however, is a huge house once belonging to Senggelinqin, a Mongolian prince during the Qing Dynasty. The northern wall of his residence stretched along half the lane which indicates the extent of his influence at the time.

The eastern end of his residence is now called the Lusongyuan (Green Pine Garden) Hotel, named after a pair of ancient pines in the courtyard. The hotel stands on part of the prince's former property. Consisting of four courtyards, it embraces pavilions, terraces and corridors. Outside the guestroom windows bamboo plants sway, adding elegance and peace to the environment. A stay here allows the guest total freedom from the hustle and bustle of the big city.



1. **The striking entrance to the Lusongyuan Hotel**
2. **Enjoys the sunshine inside the gracious courtyard**
3. **Internet access is provided in the hotel**
4. **The tranquil and elegant guestroom**



❖ Add: 22 Banchang Hutong, Kuanjie, Dongcheng District, Beijing

❖ Tel: (10) 6404 0436 Fax: (10) 6403 0418

❖ Hong Kong office Tel: (852) 2736 8828

❖ Fax: (852) 2736 8000

❖ Facility/service: There are altogether 59 rooms. Chinese, Western and Japanese food is served. Complete with teahouse and coffeehouse, as well as a quiet reading room. The business centre changes money, has Internet access and makes air and train reservations.

❖ Rate (standard guestroom without breakfast): HK$390/470 (slack/ busy season)
(special-style room without breakfast): HK$490/590 (slack/ busy season)

QUADRANGLE HOUSES They have a long history in China since the architectural style first appeared more than 2,000 years ago. Through the dynasties, people demonstrated a particular fondness for this type of residence. All imperial palaces, temples and official residences invariably took the same style. Ordinary houses also followed the same traditions. Nowadays at the very mention of quadrangle houses, people think of those in Beijing. This is because the city's neatly laid out quadrangle houses are most representative of this architectural style. Here they are spacious, unlike the narrow north-south design in Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces or the east-west arrangement in Sichuan. Quadrangle houses in Beijing usually consist of independent one-storeyed houses on all four sides, linked only by a corridor. Seen from above, they look like square boxes. In the courtyard, residents grow flowers, raise goldfish, birds and embellish the place with rocks. Behind the closed doors it is a cozy family world.

BACKPACKERS' CHOICE—FAR EAST YOUTH HOSTEL

Self-help kitchen

❖ Special features: Located in a quadrangle house whose entrance and courtyard maintain their original look. The rooms are designed and furbished in a modern style ideal for backpackers. The hostel is very close to the cultural street of Liulichang, the commercial street of Dashanlan . It enjoys easy access to transport.

❖ Add: 113 Tieshu Xiejie, Xuanwu District, Beijing

❖ How to get there: Take the subway and get off at Hepingmen Station, walk straight along South Xinhua Road, across the East Liulichang Street to the next crossroads and you will see a small redbrick house (or a Xinjiang style restaurant). Follow the small path and turn at the second street on the left. Look for the sign for the Far East Hotel. Check in at the Far East Hotel but stay in the youth hostel opposite.

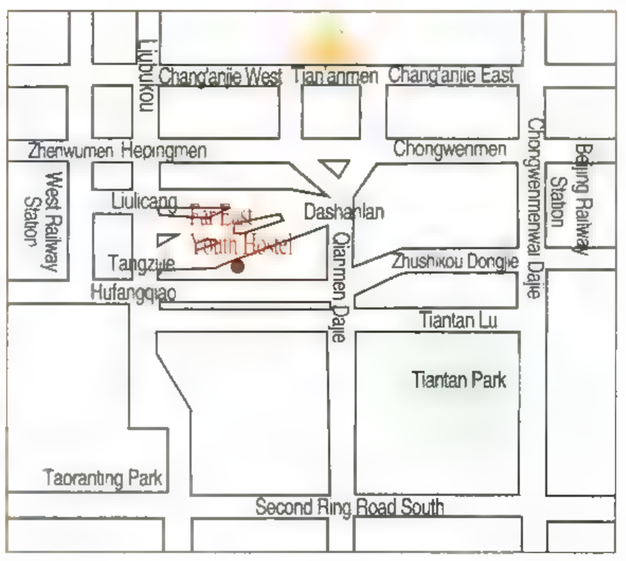
❖ Tel: (10) 8811 3118

❖ Fax: (10) 6301 8233

❖ Facilities and services: Air conditioning, washing facilities, hot water flask, chair and table and lockers. Shared bathrooms, showers, kitchen, laundry and reading room. Internet and IC card telephone sets are available. The hostel makes reservations and purchases air and train tickets for its guests, arranges visits in and around Beijing and operates a bicycle rental.

❖ Rate: 45~60 yuan/ bed (4~6 beds per room)

Small courtyard inside the hostel



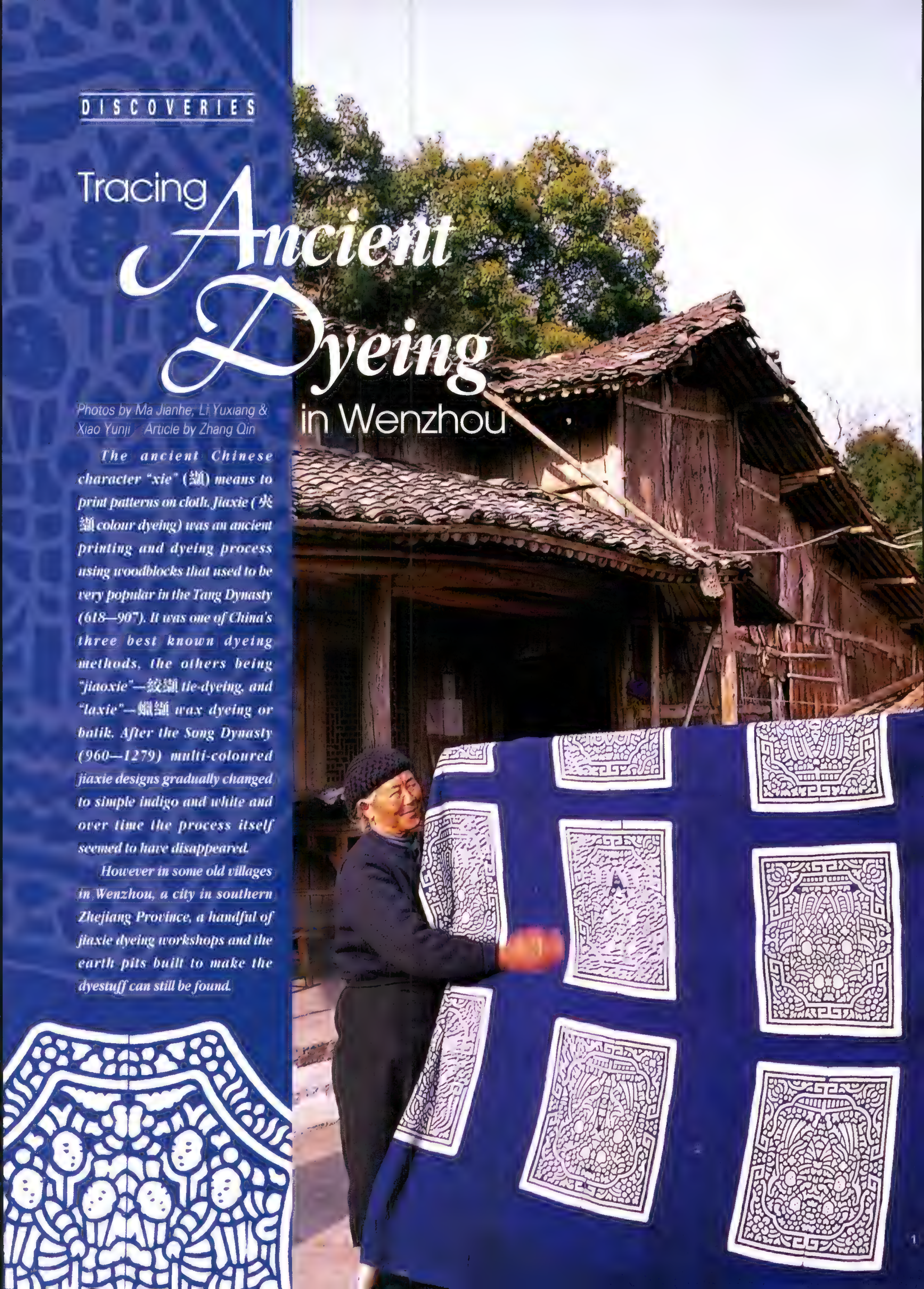
DISCOVERIES

Tracing Ancient Dyeing in Wenzhou

Photos by Ma Jianhe, Li Yuxiang & Xiao Yunji Article by Zhang Qin

The ancient Chinese character "xie" (染) means to print patterns on cloth. Jiaxie (夹染 colour dyeing) was an ancient printing and dyeing process using woodblocks that used to be very popular in the Tang Dynasty (618—907). It was one of China's three best known dyeing methods, the others being "jiaoxie"—绞染 tie-dyeing, and "laxie"—蜡染 wax dyeing or batik. After the Song Dynasty (960—1279) multi-coloured jiaxie designs gradually changed to simple indigo and white and over time the process itself seemed to have disappeared.

However in some old villages in Wenzhou, a city in southern Zhejiang Province, a handful of jiaxie dyeing workshops and the earth pits built to make the dyestuff can still be found.



Jiaxie Quilts a Must for Trousseaus

Jiaxie dyeing may have become less common but it has not vanished. In the 1950~60s, *jiaxie* quilts were still necessary for a newlywed's trousseau in Wenzhou. These quilts produced in Wenzhou at that time were not as colourful as those made between the Tang and Song dynasties and usually just featured blue and white. The Wenzhou *jiaxie* cloth was only used for quilt covers not clothes and the quilts had names based on their patterns, like "Hundred Sons" or "Dragon and Phoenix".

Around Yongqiang in the old days, when the daughter of a family was going to be married, a *jiaxie* quilt was an essential item for her trousseau. Dyeing masters, passing on their tradition from generation to generation, visited every street and lane, crying out "Tie-dyeing indigo!" According to local customs, if a newlywed couple did not use a *jiaxie* quilt the family would not be happy, or the wife will bear only daughters, or the husband or wife would die young. On top of that, the villagers would constantly complain that the bride's parents had not given their daughter a proper quilt. Therefore even the poorest household strove to make a *jiaxie* quilt for a daughter.

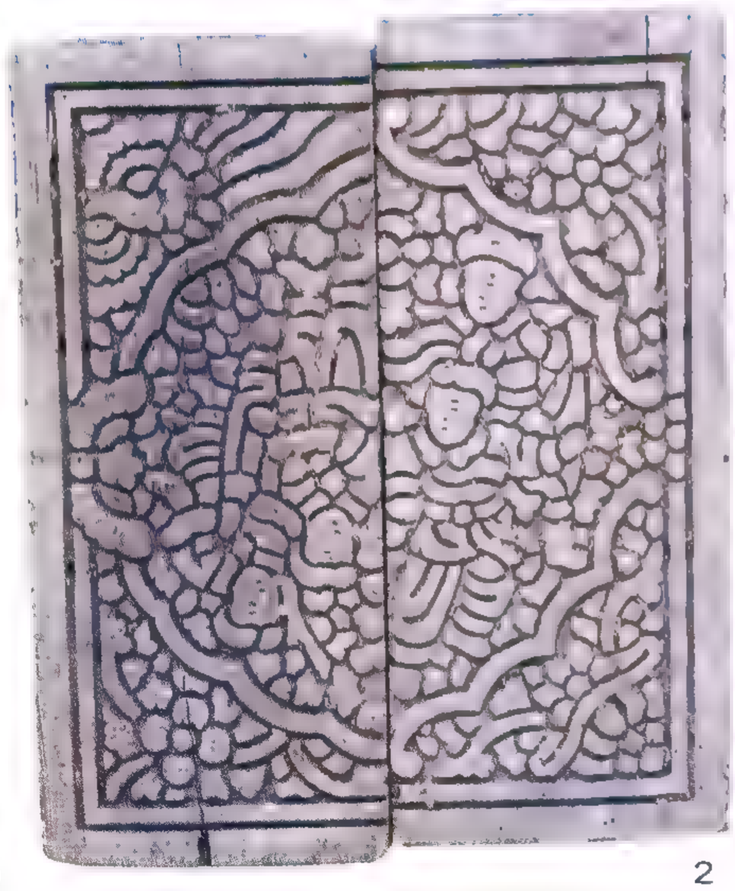
Living in a small mountain village sandwiched between Rui'an and Pingyang counties, 79-year-old Grandma Fu recalled she was engaged at the age of 14. Fu's mother guided her in spinning the yarn and weaving the coarse white cloth, which was then taken to the indigo dye workshop. On the upper reaches of the Nanxi River, Ma Mudi, an old villager, told us of a tradition in Yongjia whereby a man had to present cotton blossom when asking a woman to marry him. If the woman agreed, she would have to weave a quilt for her husband-to-be.

In Huangtantong in Leqing County, all the old-timers have *jiaxie* quilts stored in their cupboards. One old woman even has three. Apart from her own quilt, her son and daughter-in-law left one when they moved to the city. Her daughter and son-in-law also left one behind when they moved to a new house. Nowadays, no one wants to use such a hard quilt.

The family-woven cotton cloth is durable and the indigo colour will not fade for 100 years. As a result a jiaxie quilt can be used all one's life. When an old couple dies, the quilt can be passed to the next generation.

Testing Acidity and Alkalinity with the Tongue

Over several hundred years, several *jiaxie* centres developed in Wenzhou. The indigo dye produced in the township of Huangtantong in northern Leqing had the best reputation for quality. Situated in the Yandang Mountains, the township is quite well set up, with streets, houses, cowsheds and toilets all made of stone. The township's founders, the Lu family, mainly planted cereals, sweet potatoes and woad plants to make indigo dye. The indigo became the main source of income.



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Each autumn the women and children in Huangtantong would pick the woad leaves and young shoots, while the men carried them to the dyeing pits. These were dug in a series of three. The top and bottom pits were smaller while the middle one was the biggest, two metres across and one metre deep. The big pits were filled with water, and stirred at least three times a day. When the plant material in the big pit became soft and black after a few days, it was moved to the smaller pits and the steeping continued. After stirring well the decomposed leaves were taken out and mixed with powdered lime. Then the mixture was returned to the pit and the previous processes repeated more than 10 times. After all this the indigo was ready for use.

In Huangtantong, we went from family to family at random asking

1. The making of *jiaxie* quilts can still be found in southern part of Zhejiang Province. In the picture, a resident of the Lizhang Village in Leqing is sunning a piece of *jiaxie* quilt (by Li Yuxiang)
2. Carved woodblocks for printing the patterns on the quilts are exquisitely made (by Li Yuxiang)
3. When making the indigo, the decomposed woad leaves have to be taken out and mixed with powdered lime. Villagers of Huangtongtan even test the acidity or alkalinity with their tongues (by Ma Jianhe)

questions about making indigo. The old folks' interest was rekindled after a while. They even told us about some "secret recipe" handed down from their forebears. A 70-year-old man said: "A few dozen years ago, woad leaves were grown and *jiaxie* workshops were found everywhere in Wenzhou, but why was the northern Leqing dye the best? Because we bit the leaves! The Huangtongtan people tested for acidity or alkalinity, as well as the smoothness, with their tongues! As they were checking, others would add lime. That's why they were very confident about the quality." According to him, the indigo mix tastes slightly sweet before lime is added; afterwards it tastes sour.

The finished indigo would be taken back to the villagers' homes and stored in large vats weighing about 100 *jin* (50 kg) and over a metre in diameter and height. One *mu* (0.67 hectare) of woad leaves was enough to make five or six containers of indigo. Those owning more land could store dozens of vats. They were worth a large sum of money!

Buyers from other villages came to check the product. The dyeing master picked a sample of indigo from a container. Immediately he could tell the quality and set the price. The Huangtantong villagers were happy to take the orders. The villagers who made a better quality indigo usually sold dozens of containers of dye to one factory.

After receiving the orders, the Huangtantong people returned to their regular lives. Towards the Lunar New Year, the village women would prepare glutinous rice, patiently grind it and store it in the kitchen. When their husbands went out in fine weather to prepare the orders, the women made biscuits with the rice flour for their menfolk to take as they delivered the dye the next day. The villagers sometimes hired porters to carry bamboo containers of dye to Shuifutou, in Qunyang Town, Pingyang County.

Yet all this has passed. The last prosperous period for indigo production in Huangtantong was in the 1950s. Though the plant is still grown nowadays, the dyestuff is not produced any more. It is only sold as a Chinese herb called "banlangen". Disused dye pits can be seen everywhere in the village. Some have been filled in for agriculture or used for storing fertilizers. The vats are either broken or thrown away.

However, in Lizhang Village in the middle of the mountains in Huangtantong, three households are still producing indigo dye. Mr Huang, 60 years old, made 25 containers last year, and sold it to old Huangtantong villagers who now live near Hangzhou, also in Zhejiang. Fujian people also come directly to their homes to buy the material. Traditionally indigo producers used to wait for their customers at home.

Indigo, carved woodblocks and handwoven cloth are the three basics for making *jiaxie* cloth. Every household used to make its own cloth, while the quality of indigo depended on the region. Only one or two households made the woodblocks, including an artist named Su who came from Rui'an.

The Su family descendants told us a set of 17 blocks was used for making a *jiaxie* quilt, which was valued at 100 yuan. The blocks were made from pear wood. Since the 1960s strongly corrrosive sulphur

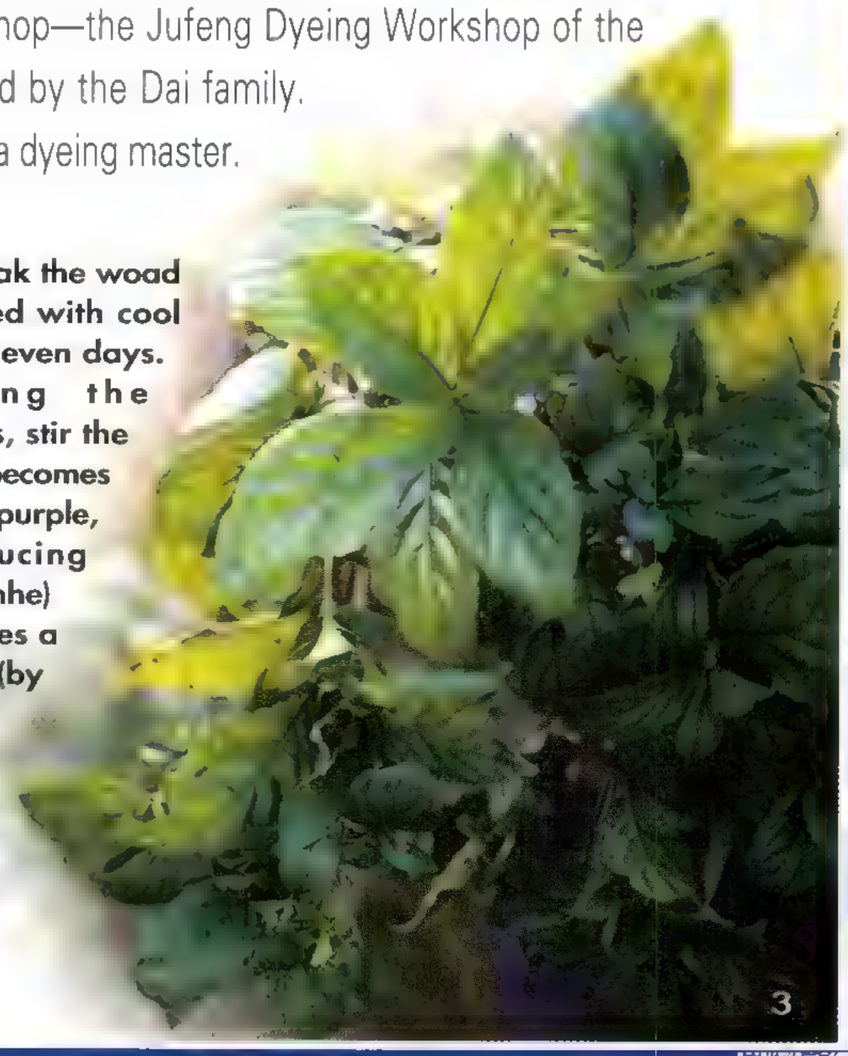
dyes have gradually replaced indigo in the dyeing industry in Wenzhou, and the woodblocks quickly deteriorated.

Jiaxie Workshop Revived

Jiaxie workshops were always family-run businesses that did not participate in the main market. Those that could afford to hire three or four workers were regarded as big employers. As it had large-scale dyeing workshops, Cangnan typified the modern industry in southern Zhejiang. Coincidentally a Cangnan resident, Xue Xunlang helped bring about the resurgence of *jiaxie* dyeing in 1988.

Xue, a former soldier, farmer and businessman, was introduced by mutual friends to an elderly Japanese woman who managed the "China Blue Pattern Cloth Store" in Shanghai. At her request, he brought along various kinds of old cloth. When the woman examined them, she was surprised to see a piece of *jiaxie* cloth. At that time, academic circles commonly believed the ancient handicraft had already disappeared in China. When Xue told her the cloth was often seen in Wenzhou, and it would still be possible to revive the technique again though it had not been used for more than 20 years, she immediately allocated a certain amount of capital.

Xue returned to Yishan in Cangnan and searched for the best known former workshop—the Jufeng Dyeing Workshop of the Huguang Shop owned by the Dai family.
He was searching for a dyeing master.



1. To make indigo, soak the woad leaves in a pit filled with cool water for three to seven days. After removing the decomposed leaves, stir the black liquid until it becomes dark blue and then purple, as well as producing bubbles (by Ma Jianhe)
2. The indigo expresses a special blue colour (by Ma Jianhe)
3. Woad leaves can be used as herbal medicine or made in dyestuff (by Ma Jianhe)

In their prime, each of the seven groups of Dai descendants owned their own dyeing workshop. Though they had already changed occupations, they had not forgotten the brilliance of their past achievements and no one was willing to be hired by an "outsider". But Xue did not give up. Finally one of the descendants, Dai Zhixue, recommended Chen Kangsuan to him.

Chen was a trainee at the Jinxiang Wangxing Dyeing Workshop in his younger days. Afterwards, he worked at the Huguang Shop and became a dyeing master for Dai Naiyu, of the fifth generation of Dais. Chen also became a close friend of Dai Zhixue. After the 1950s, with the decline of the Dais' business, Chen resigned and returned home, and made a living by selling woven cloth. When Xue Xunlang found the 66-year-old Chen, he had not made any *jiaxie* cloth for more than 30 years. He was pleased to know the handicraft from his younger days was still in use.

When Xue brought examples of *jiaxie* cloth to Shanghai, his elderly patron set up a special gallery for him. The reappearance of the cloth surprised Liu Daoguang, a professor at the Southeastern University who studied traditional handicrafts in China.

However, due to the limited market Xue's workshop eventually closed. Xue was an ordinary citizen who just wanted to make a living by his own craftsmanship. Though his dye workshop had barely run for 10 years, it surprised the experts and was praised by the mass media. Xue still does not understand why business was so bad for his workshop but all he could do was find another occupation.

1. Wasted dye pits can be found everywhere in Huangtantong (by Li Yuxiang)
2. It was all a matter of coincidence that Xue Xunlang helped bring about the resurgence of *jiaxie* dyeing (by Xiao Yunji)
3. Su Lizhou, a descendent of the Su family demonstrates the making of carved wood blocks (by Li Yuxiang)

Ancient Dyeing Centres of Southern Zhejiang

Travel Tips

Transport:

Wenzhou can be reached from such places as Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Kunming, Xiamen, and Harbin.

Accommodation:

Wenzhou Overseas Chinese Hotel ***
Add: 17 Xinhe St, Wenzhou Tel: (577) 8223911

Wenzhou Ouchang Hotel ***
Add: 71 Xueshan Rd, Wenzhou Tel: (577) 8528888

Wenzhou Yandangshan Chaoyang Villa ***
Add: Yandangshan, Wenzhou Tel: (577) 2243483

Wenzhou Hotel ***
Add: Renmin Rd C, Wenzhou Tel: (577) 8224981

1

Horse and Mule Fair by Lugu Lake

Photos & article by Song Ming

Every winter the annual Horse and Mule Fair for Sichuan and Yunnan provinces is held beside Lugu Lake at Yongning Town in Yunnan. During this grand fair thousands of horses and mules throng together, tinkling with all kinds of bells. It is one of the special sights typical of Lugu Lake.

At Yongning I felt as if I had arrived in a strange land. The small town lies in Ninglang County on flat land in a plateau basin at the foot of the Goddess Mountain. Yongning is linked to Yanyuan County in Sichuan to the east and the neighbouring Muli Tibetan Autonomous County in Sichuan to the north, and overlooks Lijiang and Zhongdian in Yunnan across the Jinsha River to the west. Covering 300 sq km of mountain ranges, the rather complicated topography of the town area is basically divided into three: the Yongning basin, Lugu Lake area and the Jinsha River valley mesa. Many ethnic groups live there; as well as the Mosuo there are also the Naxi, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Primi and Han peoples.

When I got there, the weather was clearing after a snowfall and the sky was azure blue with no traces of cloud. At the fair was a dense mass of more than 2,000 horses and mules. People in various ethnic dress had gathered to buy or sell horses, judge the animals' worth, and compete in horse riding. The place was alive with a hubbub of voices in different dialects. Teams of horses and mules kept coming and going on the brown flat land nearby. Seen from afar, these little dark moving dots of pack animals looked like musical notes dancing on the score of the plateau.

The horse and mule fair which is held at different places in the Lijiang area — firstly in Lijiang, then Ningrang and lastly at Yongnin — attracts many locals. A few young Naxi men from the mountains in Muli County arrived in Yongning after a long hard hike of five days across many snowy mountains and rivers. They had never been to the county seat and could hardly speak any Mandarin. But they had come to the fair beside Lake Lugu many times, obviously because it is very important to them.

The fair's history can be traced back a long way. Ever since the Qing Dynasty, the number of caravans has kept growing. Mosuo men have always taken pride in driving horses and relied on it as a means to get rich, hence the saying that "the Mosuo's fortune comes from horses and mules". The event was rather small until the 1970s and 1980s, when it grew into a large-scale trade fair. An elderly man in the town, Wu Zhenghua explained: "This fair became popular between the 1970s and 1980s. We are on the border between Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces as well as four counties, so people from Ningrang County, Yongsheng County in Yunnan and Yanyuan County and Muli County in Sichuan all came here to buy and sell horses and mules. It was real lively in the first few years, and as many as a few

thousand pack animals would be traded."

Nowadays, however, with many places accessible by highway, caravan transport is on the decline which directly affects the fair. The horse and mule business used to be very prosperous. A caravan usually had three to four men with 20 to 30 horses. At that time, young men in the caravans were very popular with the girls and proud of their trade. But now it's waning a man often has to drive two horses or mules by himself. The energy and prestige of its heyday are gone. Falling caravan numbers have also influenced trade at the fair.

Today, many streets in big cities still bear the name Luomashi (Horse and Mule Fair), which is derived from such fairs. City people can hardly imagine what a big horse and mule fair might look like. Thanks to modern science and technology, horses and mules have long been replaced by other forms of transport. But in remote mountains where transport is still a problem, they continue to be man's good friends, patiently toiling for people just as they always have.

Translated by L. Yu

1. One needs experience in choosing a good horse
2. The Horse and Mule Fair held every winter attracts many people
3. Lugu Lake at 2,685 metres is the highest lake on the Yunnan Plateau (by Ou Yansheng)

Roaming Through Shanxi's Stately Houses

Photos & article by
Shan Xiaogang

The central area of Shanxi Province in North China is considered the birthplace of China's merchants. Numerous mansions scattered across the countryside bear witness to its glorious history. The filming of "Raise the Red Lanterns" (director: Zhang Yimou) in the Qiao Family Mansion attracted the attention of movie goers worldwide, and a stream of visitors travelled to Shanxi especially to see this and other big houses, long neglected by the locals. However, once the people of central Shanxi realised the value of these old houses, they renovated and restored them one by one to their former magnificence.

【Design Reflects Geomancy】

Cao Family Mansion in Taigu

The Cao family mansion is located in Beiguang Village in Taigu County. The house that visitors see today, entitled Shou (壽), or Longevity, is the only surviving house of four that once formed the home of an influential merchant family surnamed Cao. The three other houses, named Fu (福Happiness), Lu (祿Official Rank), and Xi (禧 Auspiciousness), no longer exist. As the house's halls bear the names Duofu (More Happiness), Duoshou (More Longevity) and Duonan (More Sons), it is popularly referred to as Sanduotang (Three-More Hall).

On the southern side of the courtyard, two arched gates stand side by side, open for people, carts and sedan chairs. Along the 30-metre-long corridor outside the front gates are 12 red columns supporting the brackets and crossbeams above. Enter the gate and walk 30 metres northwards and you come to a slab stone road running from east to west, separating the south and north courtyards. Gates are located at the eastern and western ends of the road. The arched gate to the east,

1. The rear wall of the Cao Family Mansion
2. The two-storey tower built at the east gate of the mansion

near the Shegeng Tower, is called Auspicious Door. The rectangular door on the west side leads to an ancestral court connecting the Cao mansion to the West Garden. The road slopes gently from west to east while the house walls increase in height from west to east, reflecting the Chinese geomancy belief that when water runs from a higher to a lower point, people should strive to rise from a lower position to a higher one.

Sanduotang was built in the early Qing Dynasty (1644—1911). It consists of three buildings in the Ming Dynasty architectural style, their courtyards linked by a hallway. Each of its three buildings has five bays, making the courtyards more spacious. The main building in the middle is a three-storey tower. The exquisitely decorated hall, however, was used only when high-ranking court officials visited the family. Its four thickest beams were first painted with gold powder before coloured pictures were added on.

The three viewing towers on the roof of the main building are also unique. From east to west, they look like an ox, pig and ram respectively. It is said they were built to combat an unfavourable geomancy influence.

Tips for Touring the Cao Family Mansion

Transport: The Cao Fmily Mansion is 5 km from the county seat of Taigu. Take a train to Taigu Station, then a bus or taxi to Beiguang Village.

Admission: 23 yuan/ person

Tour guide fee: 30 yuan/ guide

Enquiry no.: (354) 6130 020

1. The unique gate tower with upturned eaves of the Cao family mansion
2. Exquisite stone and brick carvings can be found throughout the Wang Family Mansion
3. The main hall of the Wang Mansion, a wooden structure with upturned eaves and pillared corridors
4. On the top of the broad fortress walls
5. The walls of the Red Gate Fortress are as imposing as ancient city walls

Reflection of Confucian Teachings

Wang Family Mansion in Lingshi

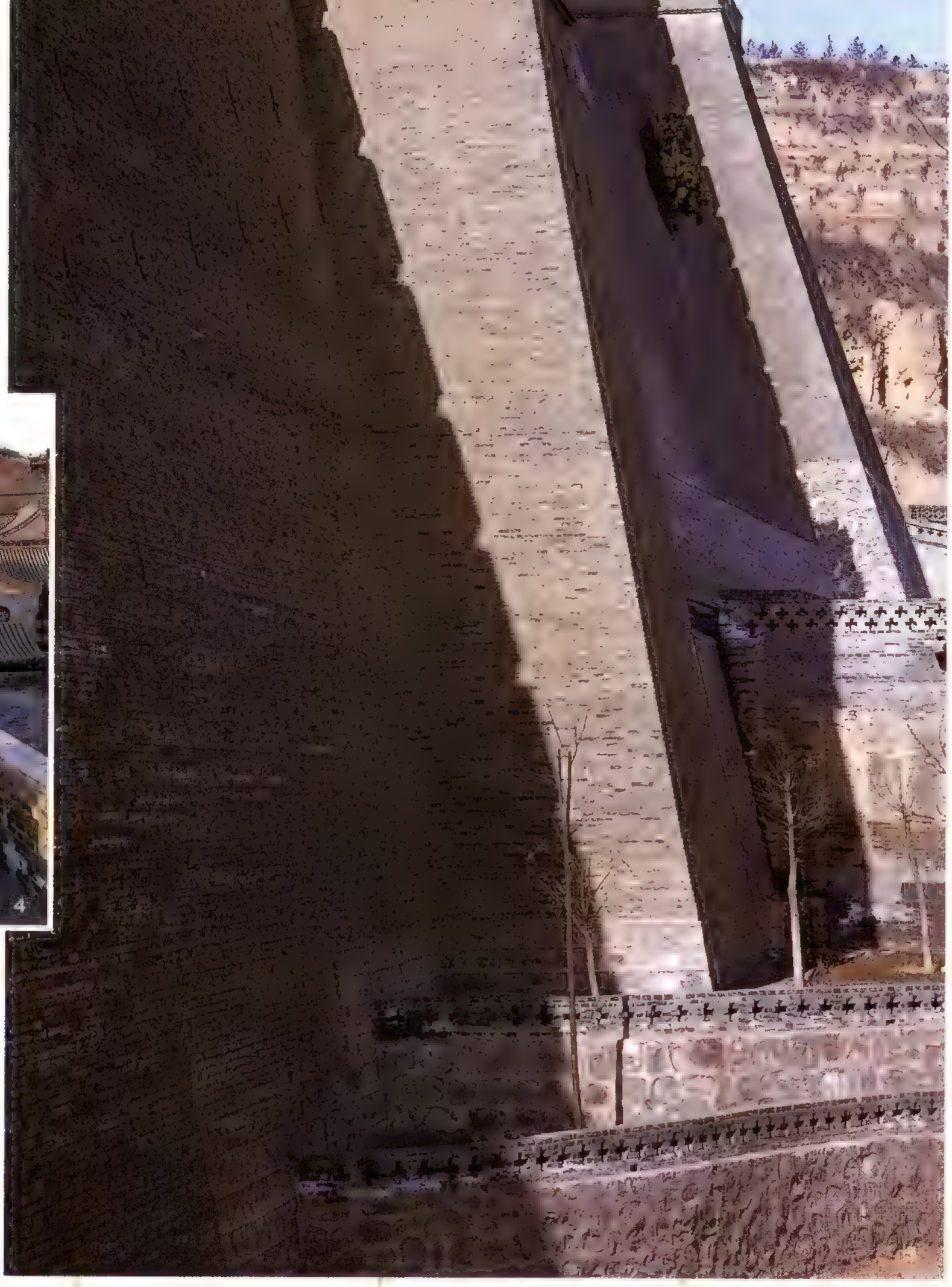
The Wang family was one of the four most influential families in Lingshi County during the Qing Dynasty. Their mansion situated in Jingsheng Village has two sections, called Gaojiaya (High Family Cliff) and Hongmenbao (Red Gate Fortress).

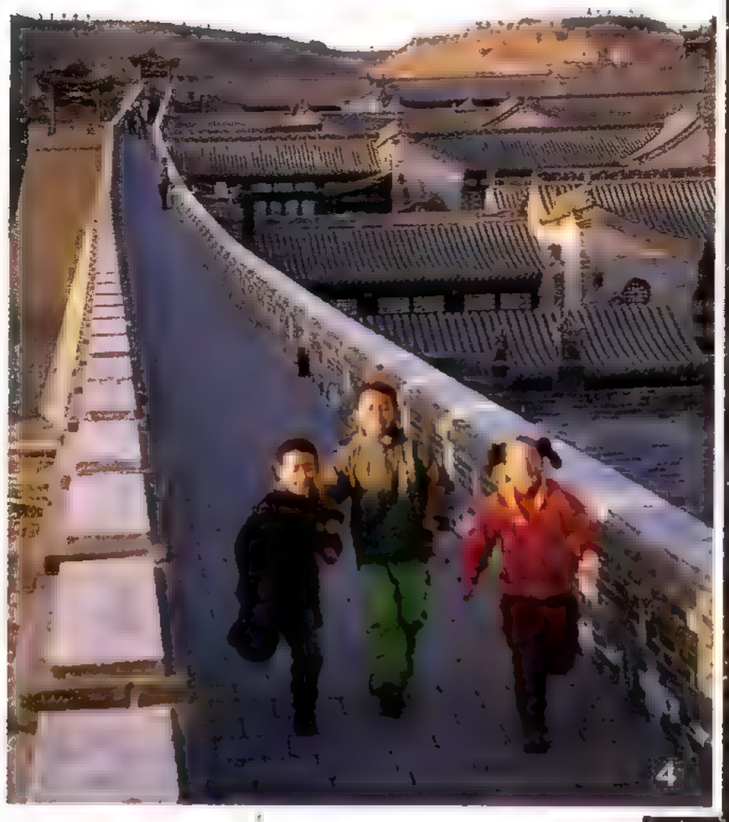
Wang Rucong and his brother Wang Rucheng, of the 17th generation of the Wang clan, built Gaojiaya, on the east side, during the early years of the Jiaqing reign in the Qing Dynasty. It was the last mansion ever built by the Wangs in Jingsheng Village. The fortress-like structure stands on the hillside following the contour of the mountain. Wang Rucheng, one of the owners, was a court official of the fifth rank, and his grandfather, Wang Mengjian had also served at the imperial court with a fourth rank position. That is why the mansion has such an imposing design. The houses inside are built strictly in line with the typical Shanxi architectural style of "siheyuan" (quadrangle, or courtyard with houses built on all the four sides). Their function was also to reflect the relationship between masters and servants, the elderly and the young, and men and women, in accordance with Confucian teachings.

Hongmenbao, the west section of the Wang Family Mansion, used to be called Hengzhenbao (Ever Propitious Fortress). As its gate was painted red, it became known as

Hongmenbao, or Red Gate Fortress. The most dominant feature of this mansion is its high, thick fortress walls, whose top is wide enough to ride a horse on. From the top of the wall, one has a clear view of the houses built on the hillsides. Below the fortress lies flat land sandwiched between two mountains. Opposite the fortress is the beautiful Mt. Mianshan. The layout inside the fortress is amazing too. Its main street and three minor ones crossing it form the Chinese character for Wang (王).

Among the highlights worth visiting are the Ancestral Temple and the Jingsheng Confucius Temple. In the old houses and courtyards you can also find works of calligraphy and lines of ancient poems, together with many legendary stories of the Wang family. It offers an opportunity to probe into the Chinese cultural legacy.





Tips for Touring the Wang Family Mansion

Transport: The Wang Family Mansion is 12 km from the county seat of Lingshi. Take a train to Lingshi and then hire a taxi to reach the village.
Admission: 35 yuan/ person
Tour guide fee: 50 yuan/ guide
Enquiry no.: (354) 7722 122

Qu Family Mansion in Qixian

The Qu Family Mansion is situated on Qixian's East Street, the oldest and most prosperous commercial street in this county town. Among all the gorgeous homes of Shanxi merchants, this is the only one found in a downtown area. In the Ming Dynasty (1368—1644), the ancestors of the Qu family moved from their native place in southeastern Shanxi's Changzi County to Qixian, where they were involved in businesses. The county town was a suitable place for the family to settle down since they had no relatives in any of the surrounding villages.

Construction of the mansion started during the reign of Qing Emperor Qianlong (1711—1799), but most of its main structures were built in later years, either in the Tongzhi or Guangxu reign. The compound follows the Shanxi tradition in the layout of its courtyard, long from south to north and narrow from west to east. But it consists of two more rows of houses, making the big compound even deeper from front to back. The theatre built in the centre of the courtyard is the only one of its kind found in a private house in Shanxi. Interestingly, the wing houses all have removable wooden framed windows, so the occupants could watch the performance from their rooms.

The Qu family had another property in town, the 200-year-old Changyuchuan teashop in Duanjia Lane. Following the winding lane, you reach the gate of a fortress-like mansion. In its courtyard are two towers built in the architectural style of a temple house. On a blue stone inlaid on the southern wall inside the front gate are carved couplets by Qi Jiongzao, a famous Qing Dynasty scholar, and many other art works in relief, symbolising either good fortune or telling a local legend. They are cultural treasures rarely found in a merchant's house.

1

Tips for Touring the Qu Family Mansion

Transport: Take a train to Qixian Station and hire a tricycle.
Admission: 20 yuan/ person
Tour guide fee: 30 yuan/ guide
Enquiry no.: (354) 5223 101

3

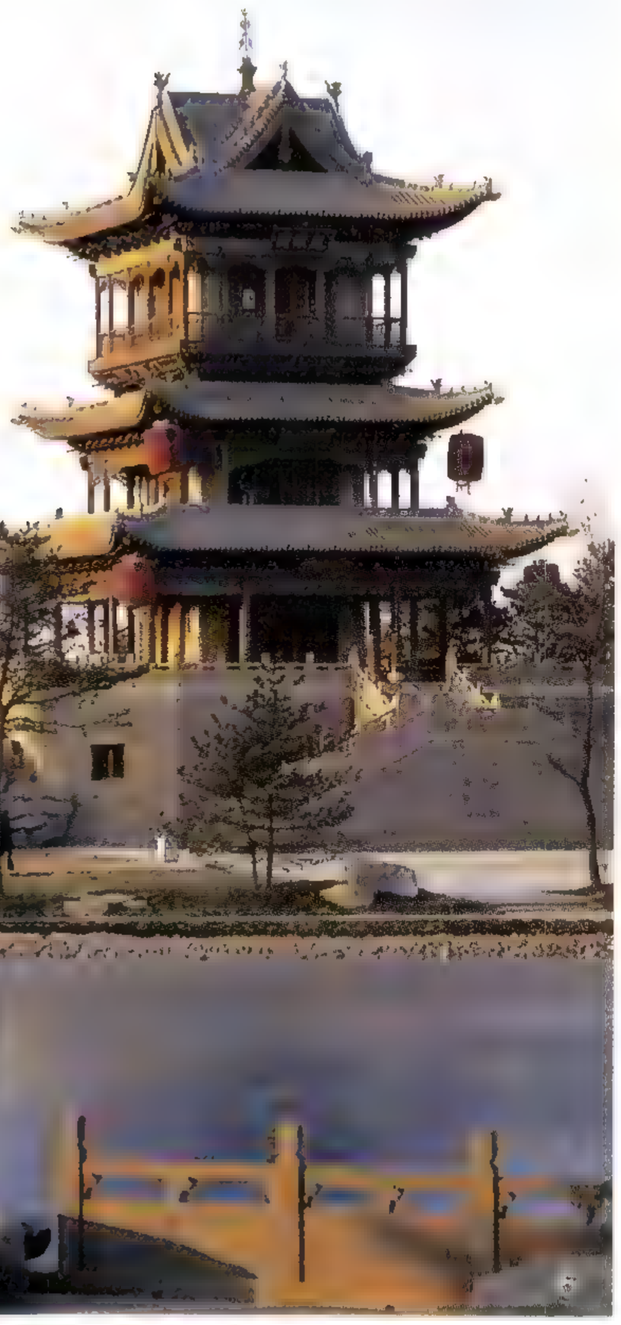
As Big as a City

Chang Family Mansion in Jinzhong

The Chang Family Mansion is located in Chewang Village in Jinzhong City. It took 200 years to fully build, from the reign of Emperor Kangxi to the latter years of the Guangxu reign. The enormous scale of the mansion is beyond anyone's imagination. It comprises two main streets, one running from east to west and the other from north to south, covers an area of 600,000 square metres and links up with the surrounding villages.

Inside the entrance is a one-kilometre street paved with slabs of stone. On its north side, the archways of the 27 houses belonging to the Chang family's nine branches stand in a line. They are in different architectural styles; some gorgeous with upturned eaves and roof corners, some with a scholarly Confucian air, some featuring a corridor, and others with roofs directly built on the walls. The inner doors of these mansions have an even greater variety of styles.

Beicitang, or North Temple, was built in the fifth year of the Guangxu reign. Standing in the front section of the mansion, the magnificent ancient building is an inspiring sight. The compound has a four-level courtyard. In the first level are carved square stone pillars, a stone flagpole and stone lions. The second level was used as a theatre in the old days. The third and fourth levels of the compound were for the temple, where members of the Chang clan gathered to hold sacrificial ceremonies to commemorate their ancestors, present reports to their forefathers and discuss important issues.



Tips for Touring the Chang Family Mansion

Transport: The mansion is one hour's drive from Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi. A scheduled free bus leaves from the Yinlong Hotel in Dongji, Huying, at 7:30, 10:30 and 13:30.

Admission: 60 yuan/ person Tour guide fee: 40 yuan/ guide

Enquiry no.: (354) 2756 123

1. The neat layout of the Qu Mansion's courtyard
2. Traditional shops line East Street, where the Qu family mansion is located
3. Brick carvings of the Qu Family's Changyuchuan teashop are among Shanxi's precious cultural relics
4. Square columns decorated with carvings outside the temple at the Chang Family Mansion
5. The Crop-Watching Pavilion built by the lakeside in the rear garden of the Chang Family Mansion

Tips for the Traveller

♦ **Transport:**

By air:
Fly to Taiyuan's Wusu Airport, 15 km from the city centre, from major cities across China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Haikou, Fuzhou, Hangzhou, Kunming, Dalian, Qingdao, Xi'an and Hong Kong.

By train:
You can take a train to Taiyuan from cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Xi'an, Chengdu, Luoyang, Nanjing and Guangzhou.

♦ **Accommodation:**

Taiyuan City

Shanxi Grand Hotel ****
Add: 5 Xinjiannan Road
Tel: (351) 8829 999

Bingzhou Hotel ***
Add: 118 Yingze Street
Tel: (351) 4042 111

Binhe Hotel ***
Add: 271 Fuxi Street
Tel: (351) 3332 222

Jinzhong City

Jinrong Hotel ***
Add: 71 Daobei Street, Yuci District
Tel: (354) 3111 888

Lingshi County

Cuifeng Villa ***
Add: Inside Cuifeng Park, Lingshi
Tel: (354) 7621 158

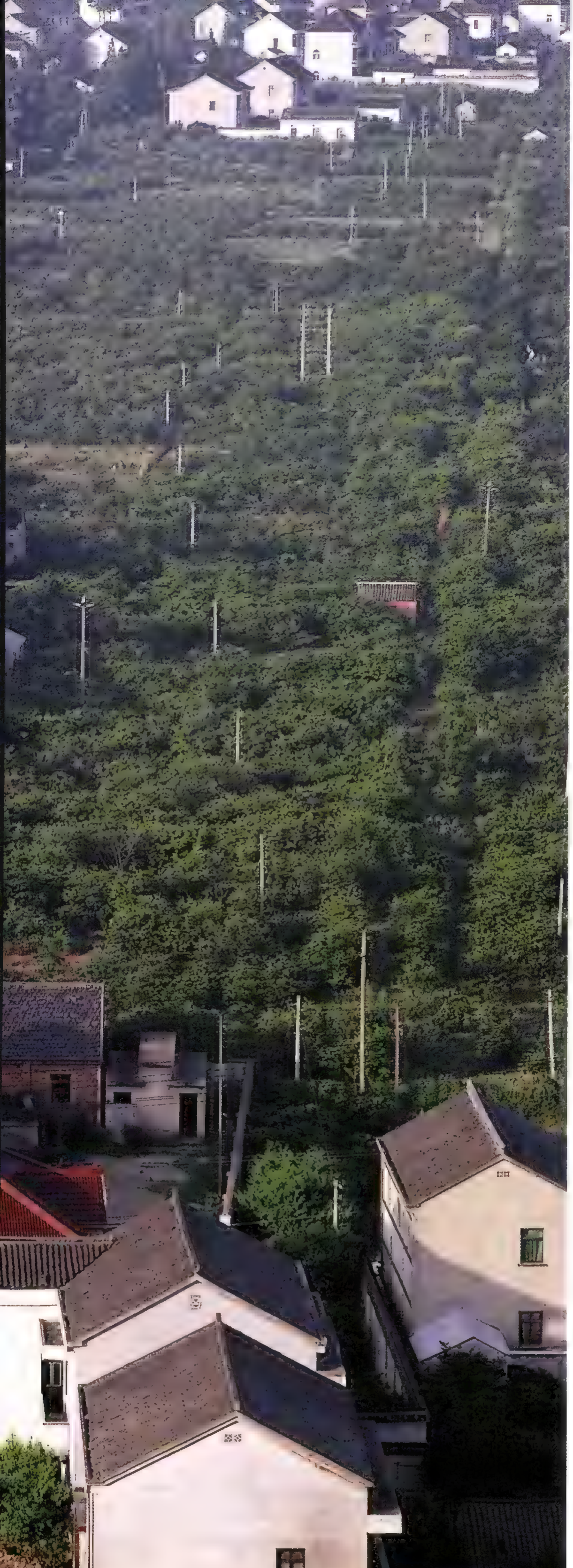
Jinfen Guesthouse **
Add: 21 Cuifeng Street, Lingshi
Tel: (354) 7613 876

Specialities:
Wheat food in Jinzhong, juice of wild dates, Taigu cake, Jialing smoked pork, vinegar from Huairen and Liupu, dried fruits and Guilingji wine.

NEW ATTRACTIONS

HAIYAN — SHANGHAI'S BACK GARDEN

Photos by Guo Jianshe Article by Tan Xuemei



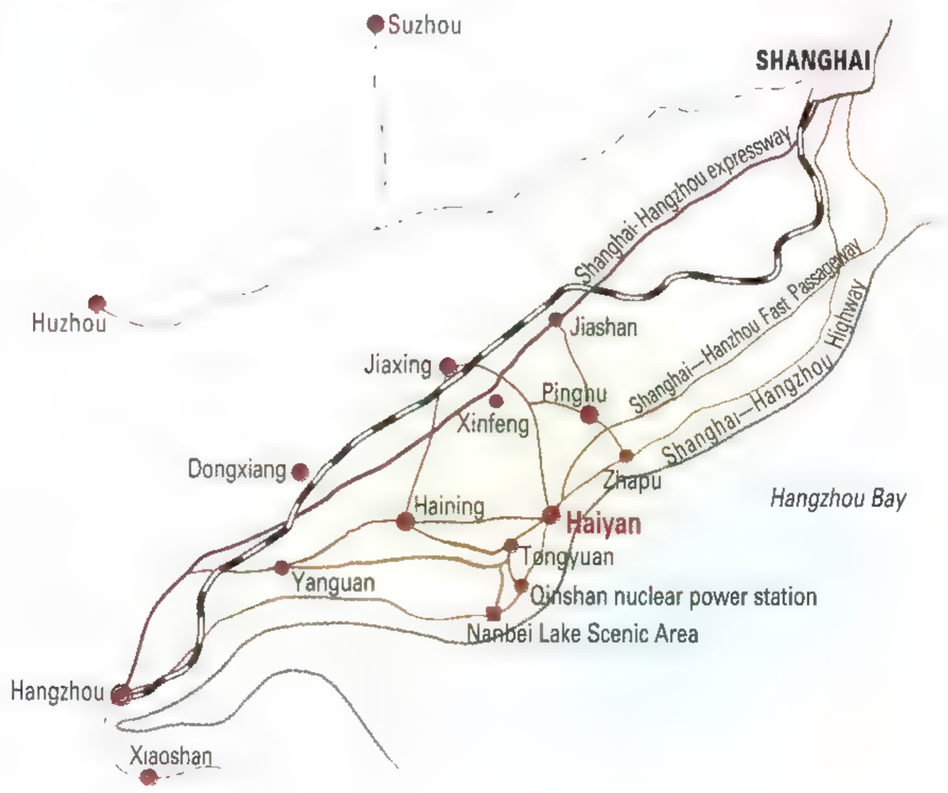
In recent years, Shanghai's municipal area has undergone continual expansion. The more cosmopolitan the city becomes, the more its residents need a natural environment to unwind and relax in. Haiyan, around 100 km away from Shanghai, enjoys wide sea views of Hangzhou Bay and with the beautiful scenery of Nanbei Lake within the county, there are many cultural points of interest. The Shanghai high-flyers with their busy and stressful lives love to come here in their spare time and it has become known as Shanghai's back garden.

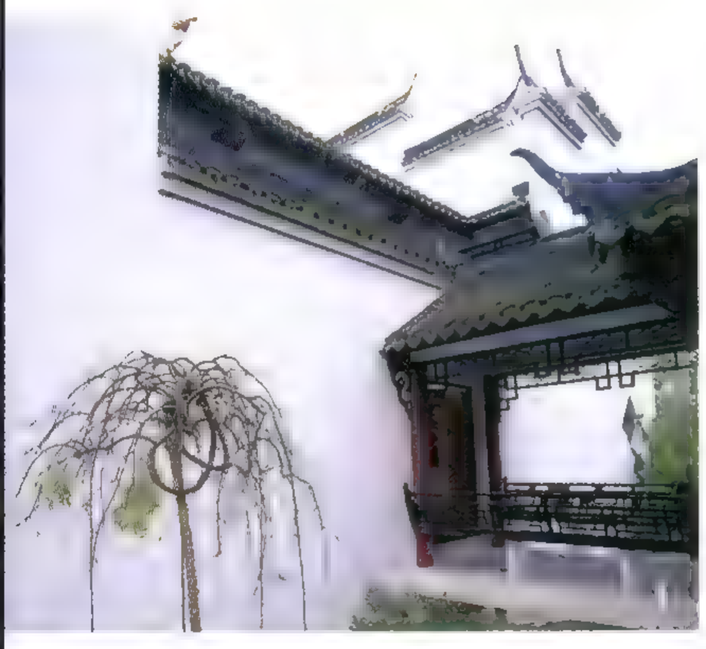
Haiyan is situated on the border between Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces, although technically it is in Zhejiang. It takes around the same amount of time to get there from Shanghai's Hongqiao Airport or Zhejiang's Xiaoshan Airport, as the distances are roughly the same.

Haiyan has a 50-km coastline that has already witnessed 2,200 years of human history. The county was established in 222 B.C., the 25th year of emperor Qin's reign, and has existed ever since. Early in the Han Dynasty, on the basis of local salt making, official salt production started up. The industry has continued for over 2,000 years. In the Nanbei Lake scenic area famous in Haiyan, stands a temple—the Wuyue Emperor Temple, which commemorates the Tang Dynasty general Qian Miao who, among

1.People living beside Lake Nanbei in Haiyan—known as "Shanghai's back garden"—have an ideal spot with mountains on three sides and the sea to the south

2. Young girl of Haiyan





others, started out trading in salt.

Where there's money to be made from salt, the economy is likely to be booming. This promotes social and cultural development, and perhaps explains why Haiyan has bred generations of literary greats and why its folk arts have flourished.

Nanbei Lake and Qiyuan Garden

The quintessential Haiyan scenery has to be Nanbei Hu, or Nanbei Lake. With mountains on three sides, a view over the sea to tne south, and a long embankment in the middle, it is the perfect combination of lake waters, mountain views and seascapes. The fact it is regarded as the back garden of Shanghai, has a great deal to do with a bold Shanghai scholar, Chen Congzhou. In his description of Nanbei Lake, he said the parks and scenic areas near large cities were the most precious treasures of the cities' residents.

The late Chen Congzhou was a well-known expert on ancient architecture and landscape design. He taught at the faculty of architecture at Tongji University for almost 50 years. His whole life was dedicated to protecting and promoting ancient Chinese architecture, especially the art of landscape design. His academic works include *Suzhou Gardens, Yangzhou Gardens, Chinese Residences* and *Stone Bridges of Shaoxing*.

Some of his achievements include the design for the repairs of Yuyuan's eastern area, the Longhua Pagoda, Ningbo's Tianyi

Pavilion, and Ru Gao Water-Ink Painting Garden, and he also successfully transplanted the Ming Xuan concept of Suzhou's Wangshi Garden to the New York Metropolitan Museum in the United States.

Chen was especially fond of Nanbei Lake in Haiyan. From the 1980s onwards, it was his perseverance that led to conservation measures. The lake of today boasts views of its waters joining the sea, the bamboo groves and tea plantations on the mountains, and the mandarin and peach orchards below the mountain, all adding to the natural beauty of the area. No wonder it was summarised perfectly by Chen Congzhou as "See the mountains, see the lakes, see the sun; Taste the tea, taste the oranges, taste the bamboo shoots."

The Jiyuan Garden within Haiyan county is one of the 10 most

famous gardens in "Jiangnan"(regions south of the Yangtse River). Created from two defunct gardens, the Zhuoyi and Yanyuan gardens, the designer used the best of both and combined their special elements to make a garden unlike any other. Because a learned scholar designed it, the appeal of the scholarly is clearly present; each step brings a new sight, sometimes several sights. The garden

1. The Chen Congzhou art gallery mainly commemorates Chen Congzhou who dedicated his life to protecting and promoting China's ancient architectural culture
2. In the firewood storeroom of a Haiyan household, stove paintings can still be found. A folk art that's been around for more than 200 years, its subjects are usually gods, plants, animals and auspicious phrases
3. Visit Haiyan in early spring and you will see rape flowers in full bloom in the villages
4. Even today some old buildings in Hanpu town keep old painings of 1950s

is full of old and rare trees such as elms, beeches, yellow poplars, sparrow plum trees, jocund trees, giinkos and Chinese wisteria.

Stove Paintings and Folk Stories

It's not just the gardens that make Haiyan so special, but the local houses as well. In the firewood storerooms of Haiyan households, there are what are called stove paintings. According to locals, the paintings have a history of over 200 years. They are usually found at the base of the stove, around the stove, or on the wall behind the stove.

With the progress of modern life, many households now use gas stoves, but the old tradition remains. The stove painting can be of gods, plants, animals, historical stories or auspicious words. Haiyan has one-burner, two-burner and three-burner stoves, with the three-burner stoves the most popular in the old days. In the countryside of Haiyan, even if people don't use wood in their stoves any more, they still include quite a large room when building a new house, install a two-burner or three-burner stove and add vividly coloured stove paintings. The Jinjiu asylum, now Zaiqing Holiday Home at Nanbei Lake, still has a three-burner stove that has been perfectly preserved. Painted on it is the story of "scraping the bone to get rid of poison" from the Chinese classics *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

Some of Haiyan's stove paintings reflect strongly contemporary issues. Paintings dating from the Great Leap Forward of 1958 that promoted planting grains and achieving record harvests still survive in rural homes at Ganpu town. Perhaps that's why they call it folk art, because it lives among the people.

Rare Haiyan Opera

Haiyan opera also enjoys a long history. Strangely, even though modern Haiyan residents speak the Haiyan dialect every day, Haiyan opera can only be heard in Fuzhou in Jiangxi Province.

Historical records say Haiyan opera is an ancient opera style, so named because it originated in Haiyan of Zhejiang. Made popular during the Ming Dynasty, it soon became the most preferred of the four famous styles of southern opera. In the Jiajing and Longqing periods of the Ming Dynasty, the style was all the rage in the Yangtse Delta area, and not until the end of the Ming and beginning of the Qing Dynasty did Kunqu opera gradually supplant it. Haiyan opera then disappeared from Haiyan for hundreds of years. However in the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty, an official in Haiyan, Tan Lun from Jiangxi, dearly loved Haiyan opera. When he retired to his hometown, he brought his theatre troupe with him, and as a result Haiyan opera became widely accepted in Jiangxi. The performers of Fuzhou in Jiangxi Province passed down the art form from generation to generation. It was until the 1990s that Haiyan people finally heard Haiyan opera still existed.

Changing Status of Rolling Lanterns

The rolling lantern is another Haiyan speciality with a long and rich history. Folk stories say it originated in the Tang Dynasty (618 — 907).

The rolling lantern is made up of 12 bamboo strips, with a diameter of around one foot. There are small, medium and large sizes. Large lanterns can be 1.1 metres in diameter, even the smallest are nearly a metre. There is a small ball inside which is either red or black. Those with red balls are cultural lanterns, weighing around 10~20 kg; the black balls mean martial lanterns, and weigh 60 kg. In the old days, the rolling lantern was used mainly to ward off robbers, or as a tool in studying martial arts and to get fit. But the appearance of a black ball lantern from a different village meant others could fight for it. The village with the largest rolling lanterns signalled its superiority. Every year at the Lantern Festival, people from every village hold their own lanterns and parade on the streets. This custom remains to this day, but it is more of a festivity than a fitness or martial arts activity. Nowadays Haiyan people see the rolling lantern as a beautiful dance and a traditional community activity.

Feng Zhangguan, who turns 71 this year, has been extremely busy in the past two years making rolling lanterns. In 2001 he made over 900. While lantern making doesn't look difficult, in fact it involves quite a lot. From gathering bamboo in the mountains to the final coat of paint there are over 20 steps. Someone less energetic probably couldn't do it.

Translated by Cheng Lei

1. The premier performance of the Haiyan opera on stage at the Wuyue Emperor Garden
2. Nanbei Lake has picturesque scenery, summarised perfectly by Chen Congzhou as "see the mountains see the lakes see the sun, taste the tea taste the mandarins taste the bamboo shoots"
3.4. The rolling lantern was originated in the Tang Dynasty and used to be a tool in learning martial arts. Now it features in performances at major celebrations and festivities
5. The old artist produced more than 900 rolling lanterns in one year

Travel Tips

➤ **Transport** Transport to Haiyan County is convenient, with daily services direct to Ganpu from Shanghai (West District Station), Hangzhou (East Bus Station), Shaoxing, Suzhou and other areas. Buses from downtown Haiyan to Nanbei Lake depart every 10 minutes. Recently, a new expressway has been completed, connecting Shanghai to Hangzhou — the Dongxi Expressway. It now takes only two hours to get to the Nanbei Lake Scenic Area from Shanghai.

➤ **Climate**

Month:	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec
Temp(°C):	4.4	5.6	8.8	15	23	25	28.5	27.8	23.7	18.5	12.7	6.5

➤ **Accommodation**

- Nanbei Lake Resort — at the east edge of Zhonghutang within the Nanbei Lake Scenic Area, by the edge of Nanbei Lake. It is the largest hotel within the scenic area. Tel: (573) 6511 245
- Wanjing Hotel — Yangshanjiao, previously called the Nanbei Lake Recovery Clinic, within the Nanbei Lake Scenic Area. It provides a physical examination centre surrounded by a gracious environment. Tel: (573)6511 491
- Taoyuan Villa — positioned among the greenery of the Sanwan Scenic Area, the villa's small wooden cabins are perfect for families and groups, while hotel accommodation is also available. Tel: (573) 6560 636

ANSHAN

A City Cast by Iron and Steel

Photos & article by Xie Guanghui

Some people may be unfamiliar with Anshan City in Northeast China's Liaoning Province, but those who invest in shares will know Anshan boasts the largest integrated iron and steel works in China. However, unlike the usual polluted industrial city, Anshan has clean, wide streets. It also features the world's largest jade Buddha, the striking Qianshan Mountain Scenic Area, and Tanggangzi Hot Springs, which won it the title of second best tourist destination in middle Liaoning after Shenyang.

When I first arrived in Anshan, my view from the expressway was a scene of blast furnaces and city combined. A circular railway passes the entrance to the Anshan Iron and Steel Plant. The train, the earliest public transport in the city, carries workers to and from the plant every day.

In recent years, more than one billion yuan has been invested in planning and upgrading the city. A total of five squares—Shengli, Zhanqian, Huoju, Xingang and Lishan—are all giant steel structures which mirror the extraordinary nature of China's "steel city".

The Cradle of China's Iron and Steel Industry

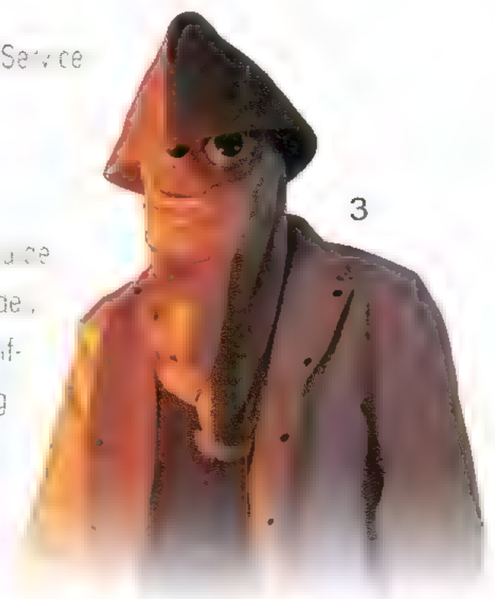
Soon after the liberation of northeast China in 1948, the Anshan Iron and Steel Company was founded. Over the past 50-plus years, the plant has contributed a large amount of steel products to China's railways, ships, machinery industry and national defence.

Visiting the Anshan Iron and Steel Company is like visiting Qingdao's beer brewery. Our tour of the Anshan Integrated Iron and Steel Works started from the Dagushan Iron Mine. At the top of Dagushan we had a bird's-eye view of an iron ore mine, 180 metres deep from the horizon. Then we visited the Qidashan Iron Ore Factory, which is the largest of such enterprises in China, with up-to-date technologies and advanced ore dressing techniques for red ores. In the firing workshop, we saw the firing of selected iron ores transported from the Qidashan Diaojuntai Ore Dressing Plant, with the fired ores sent to the blast furnaces of the Iron-Smelting Plant. Along the brand new corridor we came to the No. 10 Blast Furnace and admired the flowing molten iron. In the No. 2 Steel—Making Plant, we found the only open-hearth furnace in the Anshan works, which is preserved as a relic of China's iron and steel industry. Fifty metres from the open-

hearth furnace stood three new-type converters, which had been created from open-hearth furnaces. When molten iron was poured from a huge tank above, we witnessed a magnificent scene of sparks of molten iron splashing in all directors. Finally we saw at firsthand how iron and steel were smelted in front of the No. 1780 production line at the Hot-Strip Plant.

Tour of Anshan Iron and Steel Plant

The tour is exclusively arranged by the Angang Gangxing Travel Service
Add: 1F, Main Building of Dongshan Hotel, Angang
Tel: 412-5592501
Fax: 412-5538236
Fees: Large group (30 people): 50 yuan/person (including tour guide and fare); small group: 100 yuan/person (including tour guide): 300 yuan for fare. Telephone booking is required. In the half-day tour, participants will visit iron- and steel-making plants and the No. 1780 production line.



1. A bird's-eye view of the musical fountain in the square in front of Anshan Railway Station
2. A tramcar preserved in Anshan
3. To prevent splashes of molten iron, workers must wrap themselves up tightly
4. When molten iron is poured from huge tanks, a magnificent array of sparks fly in all directions
5. When steelworkers take samples from the converter, they must be quick of eye and deft of hand

Qianshan, Symbolic Mountain of North China

Qianshan Mountain is a significant tourist destination in Anshan City. Leaving the city proper, our bus headed southeast, went through a tunnel and arrived at the Qianshan Mountain Scenic Area after a turn to the right. Qianshan, an undulating southern arm of the Changbai Mountains, has black asphalt roads leading from the foot to the summit. Looking at the trees flashing past the window, I felt my skin and whole body refreshed by the rippling greenery.

Our bus stopped at the Tiancheng Mile Daochang (Natural Maitreya Buddhist Ground) Square, which is engulfed by mountains and fresh air. Past the front gate, we began to climb the mountain up a flight of steps. I found the pine trees and rocks along the way as beautiful as those on Huangshan Mountain. No wonder there's the saying "Huangshan Mountain in the South and Qianshan Mountain in the North". Half an hour later, we came to the Beigou Xiouliantai Scenic Area. From the lookout terrace I heard the wind whistling. I was surprised to see the distant mountain ridges looked just like a statue of Maitreya standing over 70 metres high with a round, shaven head, two eyes, a nose and a mouth. The five fingers of his left hand were slightly open, and his right hand made a fist on his right leg. Facing the Buddha on Cuiping Peak is a cave, six metres deep and one metre wide. It once held an old Buddhist altar. With the passage of time, the altar's surface became eroded. Under the altar was a stone incense burner. Some porcelain pieces from the Ming and Qing Dynasties were retrieved from the bottom under a thick layer of ashes. This meant people in ancient times had already found the Buddha and paid homage to him.

Tour of Qianshan Mountain Scenic Area

Seventeen kilometres southeast of Anshan City, this scenic area covers an area of 44 sq km. As one of the three famous mountains in northeast China, Qianshan Mountain features exquisite peaks, graceful rocks, deep and secluded valleys, ancient temples, oddly-shaped pine trees and beautiful flowers. Observing the natural stone Buddhist statue, over 70 metres high, from the Xiouliantai, is a must of the tour.

Transport: Bus No. 308

Opening hours: 0:00~24:00

Admissions: Scenic Area 30 yuan; Jade Buddha 20 yuan; tour bus in the scenic area 5 yuan.

Tel: (412) 5412 005

Fax: (412) 5410 231

The World's Largest Jade Buddha

The Jade Buddha Court (Yufoyuan) in eastern Anshan was built to enshrine the world's largest jade Buddha. The Benevolent Sakyamuni wearing a black-and-white kasaya sits on a lotus throne. Behind the Jade Buddha, I found a statue of the Goddess of Mercy crossing the sea on a huge turtle, her left hand holding a bottle and her right hand a willow branch. I gasped in admiration at the huge jade Buddha and its superb craftsmanship.

Xiuyan, together with Hotan in Xinjiang, Wenchuan in Sichuan and Hualien in Taiwan are known as China's four hometowns for jade and stones. Though serpentine produced by Xiuyan is not as pure as white jade from Hotan nor as precious as cat's eye stones produced in Hualien, it makes up half of China's jade output.

On July 22, 1960, Wang Xiu, a miner at the Xiuyan Jade Mine and several of his fellow workers dug up a huge jade block, 100.68 cubic metres in size and weighing 260,760 kg. An appraisal proved the jade was top quality without any impurities or cracks. It was called the Jade King, being seven to eight times bigger than the massive jade stone of Myanmar, the largest one in the world. Limited by the economic and transport conditions at that time, the miners could not move the huge stone from the mountain. To prevent this rare treasure from being exposed to the sun and rain, they covered it up again with earth and crushed stones.

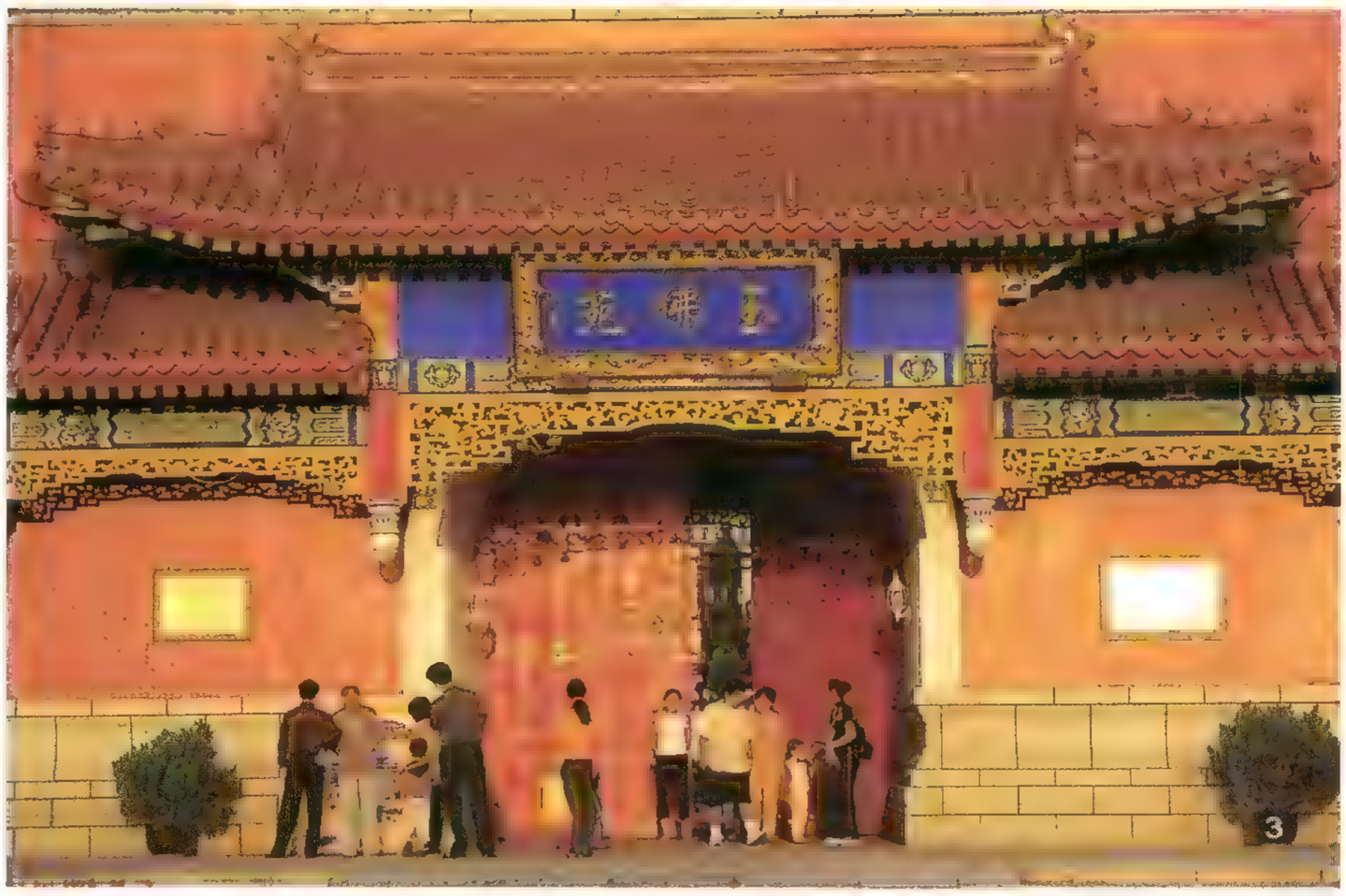
More than 30 years later when Anshan began promoting itself as a tourist destination, the city government decided to move the Jade King from the remote mountains. Xiuyan is more than 100 km from Anshan, separated by six mountains and over 10 rivers. What transport method should be used? Would the bridges, culverts and roads on the way bear such a tremendous weight? The city government on the one hand sent

1. Sculptures in the square in front of the Railway Station attract many people
2. The striking Qianshan Mountain
3. The Jade Buddha Garden in Anshan's East Mountain Scenic Area
4. At the Jade Buddha Pavilion, visitors can admire the world's largest Jade Buddha, listed in the *Guinness Book of Records* in November 1997

workers to consolidate the transport facilities, and on the other hand, asked help from the military stationed in southern Liaoning Province. The military agreed without hesitation, and dispatched a tank and a tractor to the site.

On October 12, 1992, the jade was moved to Anshan. Some people suggested a statue of a revolutionary leader be carved to encourage the political and ideological education of later generations; some proposed a statue of Lei Feng (1940–1962, a famous sacrificial figure in China) be set up to turn Anshan into an educational centre for patriotism; while others proposed a jade museum showcasing the huge treasure. Eventually, the city government decided to carve a statue of Sakayamuni to the front, and behind the Goddess of Mercy Crossing the Sea.

After 18 months' meticulous work, a jade Buddha over five metres high was created. Two years later, the Jade Buddha of Anshan was listed in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the largest Jade Buddha in the world.



Tour of the Jade Buddha Court (Yufoyuan)

Address: 58 Lunta Street, Tiedong District

Transport: Bus No. 308

Opening hours: 7:30–18:00 (summer), 8:00–16:00 (winter)

Admission: 50 yuan

Tel: 412-5550382 Fax: 412-5550320

Rejuvenation in Hot Mineral Mud

If you feel tired after travelling around Anshan all day, bathing in hot springs is your best option. The Tanggangzi Hot Springs in Anshan have a time-honoured history. On his eastern expedition, Tang Emperor Taizong Li Shimin (598–649) once passed Anshan. The entire force was exhausted. After a bath in the hot springs, the emperor completely recovered his strength. Later the people called it the Site of the Emperor Tang Taking a Bath. In the Qing Dynasty, when Emperor Qianlong came here to offer sacrifices to the ancestors, he soaked in the hot springs three times. Visitors can also find the Dragon Palace Hot Springs built for the last emperor Pu Yi of Qing Dynasty by the Japanese, and the Dragon Spring Villa constructed by Zhang Zuolin, a famous warlord in northeast China, for his third concubine.

The temperature of the Tangganzi Hot Springs is as high as 72°C and contains various trace elements, such as potassium, sodium, calcium, magnesium, fluorine, tungsten, molybdenum, vanadium, titanium, sulphur and metasilicate. Its natural hot mineral mud has a temperature of 45°C. This mud was formed by the physical and chemical action of volcanic ashes after a volcanic eruption several hundred millions years ago, and water from the hot spring. The mud is soft and fine, and contains 19 elements, such as silicon dioxide, iron, fluorine, sodium oxide, aluminum oxide and calcium oxide. It is good for treating rheumatic and joint diseases, neurasthenia and soft tissue injuries, as well as protecting and beautifying the skin. As a result almost all tourists like to soak in the hot springs before leaving Anshan.

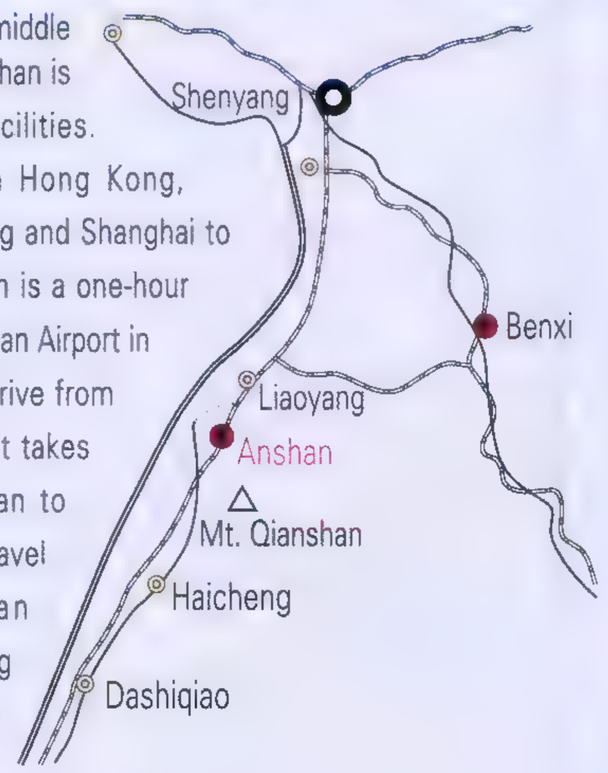
A Tour of Tanggangzi Hot Springs

As one of China's four major hot springs, Tanggangzi Hot Springs are 7.2 km south of Anshan City proper. There are a total of 18 hot springs pools. With the temperatures varying from 57~72°C, the hot springs contain more than 20 varieties of mineral elements beneficial to health. The hot ore mud therapy at the Dragon Palace Hot Springs is the most famous.

Add: 1 Wenquan Street, Qianshan District

Travel Tips to Anshan

○Transport Located in the middle part of Liaoning Province, Anshan is well served by transport facilities. Scheduled flights go from Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Beijing and Shanghai to Shenyang and Dalian. Anshan is a one-hour drive from the Shenyang Taoxian Airport in the north, and a three-hour drive from Dalian Airport in the south. It takes about 12 hours from Anshan to Beijing by train, or you can travel via the Shenyang-Dalian Expressway, Beijing-Shenyang Expressway and a modern highway network.



○Accommodation

Anshan International Hotel ★★★★★
Address : 219 Yuanlin Road, Tiedong District, Anshan
Tel : (412) 5555 888 Fax : (412) 5555 988

Tianhe Hotel ★★★
Address : 58 South Jianguo Road, Tiedong District, Anshan
Tel : (412) 2237 928 Fax : (412) 2235 043

Blue Sky Building ★★
Address : 5 Zhanqian Street, Tiedong District, Anshan
Tel : (412) 2238 600 Fax : (412) 2235 806

Itineraries for One-day Tour of Anshan

Most tourist attractions are located in Anshan City proper. Usually it takes less than 20 minutes to go from one attraction to another, so tourists have a wide choice.

Highlight Tour The sights at Qianshan Mountain, the Jade Buddha, paying homage to the arhats, and taking a bath in the hot springs.

Iron and Steel Tour Visiting the mine, iron-smelting plant, steel rolling mill and steam engine factory.

Admissions: 38 yuan for bathing in the hot springs and 58 yuan for mud therapy.

Transport: A special bus goes from the Anshan Railway Station to the hot springs

Reminders before having a hot mineral mud treatment:

1. **People with cardiac disease or high blood pressure should notify the staff before the treatment**
2. **If you experience a large amount of sweating, rapid breathing or other discomfort, you should immediately notify the staff**
3. **It is recommended to have hot spring baths and mineral mud treatment on alternate days**

1. **The Dragon Palace Hot Springs in Tanggangzi**
2. **Hot mud is good for treating diseases and injuries as well as protecting and beautifying the skin**
3. **Tanggangzi also boasts many cultural sites such as the "Tang Emperor Bathing Pond"**

Highlights of Issue No. 271

- As a change from Taiwan's best known tourist sights such as Taipei, Kaohsiung, Alishan and Sun Moon Lake, our correspondent offers a different Taiwan in our next "Feature Story"— A visit to Taiwan's outlying islands: **Kinmen, Penghu, and Matsu**.

  Off the coast from Xiamen in Mainland China's Fujian Province, Kinmen is soaked in military atmosphere thanks to its unusual historical background. Even today locals still use bomb fragments as kitchen knives, while there are hospitals built in air-raid shelters.

  Lying in the middle of the Taiwan Strait, the Penghu Islands have a different kind of charm. Their tranquil environment is ideal for experiencing the fishing life, appreciating the beautiful coastline and enjoying aquatic activities.

  The Matsu (or Mazu) Islands are located at the northeastern end of the Taiwan Strait, just across the Minjiang River from Fuzhou, again in Fujian. Every example of island architecture as well as the local language strongly identifies with eastern Fujian. But the residences rebuilt from stone houses, and privately run eateries and cafes provide fresh images of Taiwan.

- **Jianshui** (also known as Lin'an), a time-honoured city in central Yunnan Province is home to numerous relics and heritage sites. However, more than 190 ancient wells have not been listed as monuments although they are important to the locals and still in use to this day. Greatly drawn to these wells and their varied designs, the writers in "Discovery" visited some 30 of them during a three-day trip, getting to know the legends behind them and the local people's passion for them.

- The tiger is one of the world's most threatened animal species. Of the five types of tigers (Bengal, Indo-Chinese, Siberian, South China and Sumatran), four are found in China. The Siberian (or Northeast) tiger is famous for its huge size. However, due to deforestation and illegal hunting by man, the number of Siberian tigers has sharply fallen and the species is on the verge of extinction. **The fate of the Siberian tiger** depends on the constant endeavours of experts and all humankind.

THE MYSTERIOUS MT. DAFENGDING UNVEILED

Photos & article by Zeng Chengdong

Mt. Dafengding is a state nature reserve in the Mabian Yi Autonomous County of Sichuan Province on the southwestern edge of the Sichuan Basin. It separates the Greater and Lesser Liangshan Mountains and is an eastern branch of the Hengduan Mountains. The highest Dafengding peak is 4,042 metres above sea level and surrounded by at least 43 peaks topping 3,000 metres. The reserve boasts dozens of rare animals such as panda and takin and scores of plants like the dove tree, azalea, and spinulose tree. The area is inhabited by the hospitable ethnic Yi people. Due to its remoteness, few tourists have been here.

2

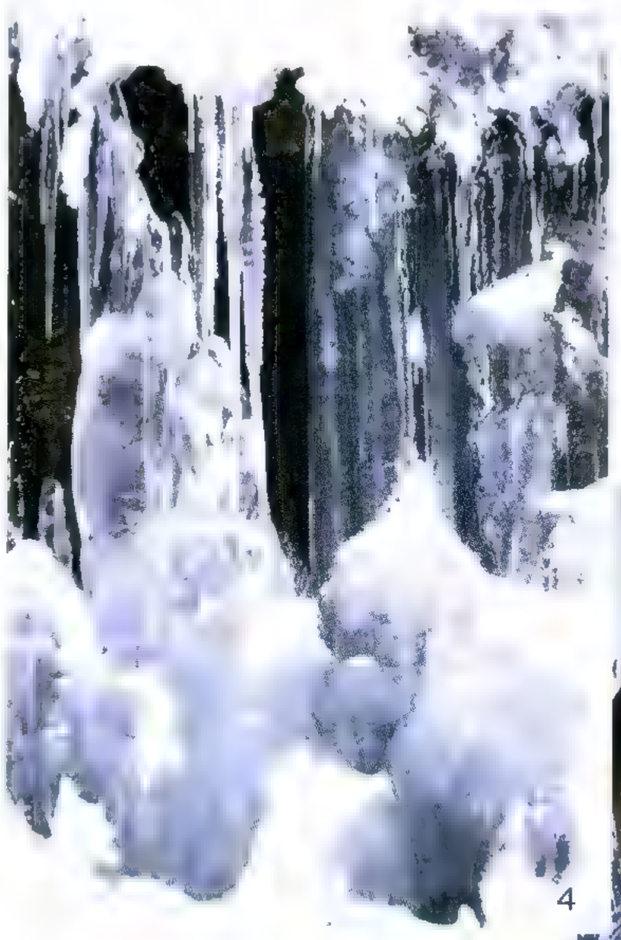
Three hundred kilometres from Chengdu, the Mabian Yi Autonomous County is a poor and distant place in the minds of the provincial capital's residents. In ancient times, the renowned Tea and Horse Caravan passed through this mountainous area. Even today, horse caravans are still active linking the villages and hamlets scattered through the Greater and Lesser Liangshan mountain ranges. We drove along the Chengdu-Leshan Highway, reached the Dadu River at Shawan and continued north following the river. After crossing several ranges, we arrived at the county seat five hours later. The county seat is located by the Mabian River, whose source is on Dafengding. About 40 km separates the county seat from the administrative office of the Dafengding nature reserve.

3

We had been told there was no accommodation or dining facilities on the mountain except for a few simple huts for reserve rangers. So we bought all necessities at the county seat. Once up in the mountains, we had to rely on some local guides to help carry our belongings. It rained mercilessly for a couple of days after we arrived. The ground was constantly wet. We moved to a place called Gaozhuoying Township, 900 metres above sea level, waiting for the

sky to clear. It was a typical Yi village where villagers all wore their national costume. Men had shawls over their shoulders while each woman wore a small embroidered cap, and a cigarette between her lips. Because of the language barrier, we could have been in a foreign country.

The head of the administrative office, Shuare Luobo, enthusiastically entertained us according to local custom. We were offered large bowls of chicken and other meat plus liquor. Following the custom, he first presented me with a portion of chicken neck to show his respect and to welcome me.



4

◎ Dafengding Wreathed in Swirling Snow

It was pretty dank in Gaozhuoying Township. When I got up in the morning, I found the cover of the quilt rather damp. Everyone was impatient. If we had to wait for a fine day to climb to the top of the mountain, we would rather wait another 2,000 metres higher up. So it was decided we would climb further. We began making some preparations, assembling enough food and drink for 10 days which weighed 200 kg. Ten of us set off at 10 next morning in a truck provided by the administration office. We passed the Jueluo River forest farm and reached the first observation terrace, 2,000 metres above sea level. By now the snow was a foot deep and as the truck found it impossible to go any further it had to leave us there. We loaded all our gear on our backs. Trudging through the thick snow, we struggled on. In the swirling snow, each person had to follow closely the footprints of the one in front. No one dared lag behind.

Around five o'clock in the afternoon, we arrived at the Yi village of Amei, 2,460 metres above sea level. It was -15°C. The team leader said we must not go any further and should pitch tents right away. We were very hungry as the only food we had eaten all day was some noodles for breakfast. As we began to prepare supper, one of the girls fainted because of lack of oxygen at such a high altitude. The snow on the ground was more than a foot deep now and there was no place to sit. The guides immediately erected a tent, pumped up air mattresses, found some firewood and lit a fire. Warmed by the fire, the girl gradually recovered.

Next morning, we woke up early since it was too cold to sleep any more. I crept out of the tent and was amazed by a world of snow. Snowflakes danced in mid air, mountains were enveloped in white snow. We were actually in a belt of azalea trees, their branches bent under the weight of snow. I discovered some animal footprints. The Yi guide told me they belonged to a takin.

Our plan for the day was to go to a rangers' hut known as Miaopu. To reach the place in one day, said the team leader, we first had to take a trail covered by waist deep snow. The Yi guides, each carrying a load as heavy as 40 kg, took the lead and trod out a path for us. We struggled with each step towards a road, 2,600 metres above sea level, and then followed the road up. Snow there was half a metre deep.

5

◎ Discovering Panda Footprints

When we reached a height of 2,650 metres, our team leader at the front discovered some panda footprints. The Yi guides estimated the panda had passed here four hours previously and must be somewhere nearby. They believed the panda was on its way down the mountain in search of food. Later on, we found some fresh droppings and footprints of pheasants, and some other animal footprints. Even the local guides could not tell what animals had left those marks.

1. A shepherd on Mt. Dafengding
2. Even eyebrows and moustaches are frozen
3. Pitching tents at Amei, 2,460 metres above sea level
4. Icicles at the hot spring
5. The "five-star" hut for the nature reserve rangers built of wooden boards and bamboo mats

After searching for new traces of animals, we moved on. Suddenly we heard a gurgling sound of water ahead. Then we saw a misty hot spring. It was in such a remote place no one knew what minerals the water contained or what temperature it was. Bending down, we scooped up water to wash our faces.

Then we reached a seventy-degree snow-clad hillside. The road along it was covered by frozen snow fallen from the slope, effectively making it as steep as the hillside. The other side of the road dropped away into a deep valley. It was certainly very dangerous, but we had no alternative but to use this road. Putting down our packs, we began to dig out a relatively level path. Fortunately, it was only a dozen or so metres all up and did not take us long. About six in the evening, we found Miaopu through the misty snow. Miaopu was only a small wooden hut a little over 20 square metres, a place for the reserve rangers. But after all our difficulties, it seemed like a five-star hotel.

Nearby, a pagoda stood on a mountain ridge at about 2,800 metres high. The local Yi people believed this was the place where the souls of their ancestors dwelt. No one was allowed to touch any tree or any plant there, or to speak loudly.

◎ Revisiting Dafengding in May

The snow showed no sign of letting up. It was impossible to climb to the top of Dafengding. We felt very disappointed but had to go down the mountain. I decided to come back again in mid May when the azaleas would be in full bloom.

When I next arrived at Gaozhuoying, Shi Ji and some other Yi friends had been waiting for me for a long time. I had planned a 15-day trip and entrusted all arrangements for accommodation and food to Shi Ji.

Our jeep stopped occasionally on the way and it was well past 2:00 p.m. before we arrived at Yakou. The wind was strong as we pitched our tents on the hillside. I checked the altimeter. It showed 2,500 metres above sea level and the temperature was 2°C. The mountaintop was only half an hour away, so we could afford to linger to enjoy the beautiful scenery around us. The rain stopped, but was followed by a shower of hail. However hail is believed to augur a fine day. Heading into a powerful gale, I found it difficult to breathe. Finally we reached the ridge and were rewarded by unbelievably magnificent landscape on the other side. The ridge was undulating, and the Yi guide told me the mountains in the distance were the

Himalayas. I checked my map later and found it was the Mt. Gongga.

Just before daybreak the next morning, the temperature was 1°C and a fierce wind still blew. Luckily I had bought a shawl at the foot of the mountain and it was just the thing I needed now. Such shawls are made of wool, and are wind-proof no matter how strong the gale. Though I was unable to see the actual sunrise, the morning clouds were beautiful. As they rolled and billowed, they turned red and then bright yellow, making the vast land golden too. Even Shi Ji and his colleagues were held spellbound. He had been working here for more than 10 years, yet had never witnessed such a glorious scene. This was because he had never been at such a height at five o'clock in the morning. Pointing to the mountains around us, he told us each of their names.

◎ Crystalline Rocks at the Moon Lake

Despite the darkness, we began climbing again at 5:30 next morning. It only took us 20 minutes this time to get to the top, and I set my camera on a tripod. Drizzle slanted in the wind. The Yi guides said it would be fine after the wind and sure enough before long we could see grassland in the distance. It was indescribably beautiful. Then the sun gradually appeared, visible one moment then disappearing the next amid the clouds. The land, the mountains and the clouds kept changing their appearance. This was paradise! All of a sudden, the rain let up and a beautiful rainbow hung over the grassland. An elderly Yi man exclaimed: "The Himalayas have come!"

One day we decided to go to the Moon Lake (Yueliang Haizi). We trekked along a ridge 3,300 metres above sea level, the surrounding landscape enchanting me. By noon we reached a river dividing the Greater and Lesser Liangshan ranges. The mountainsides here were scattered with grotesque black rocks as if we were on the surface of the moon. I noticed many crystalline rocks with strange carvings. It must be a haunted place for stone lovers.

The next day, we followed a clear stream up and came to the source of the Moon Lake, at an altitude of 3,700 metres. We could see glistening crystalline rocks everywhere by the banks of the stream. I noticed a lot of crystalline rocks had been quarried. Crystal is transparent and hexagonal in shape.

◎ Tent Terrors on a Stormy Night

The weather is always changeable in mountains. The night before we were due to descend the mountain, a sudden clap of thunder startled me and the rain poured down. The lightning scared me and the wind-blown rain ripped at our tent. What worried me most was the possibility the rain might make the stream flood. Our campsite was only half a metre above the level of the stream and a torrent of water from the mountains might wash us down the slope. I poked my head out and shone my torch at the stream. Luckily it was not rising. We could do nothing more than pray for calm. Anyway we dared not sleep any more and as water had long been trickling into the tent we had to sit on the air mattress. According to local guides, every year people were struck by lightning. Fortunately nothing terrible happened to us. When day broke, I saw a clear view of Dafengding's principal peak. The vegetation here looked extremely healthy. The earth had entirely absorbed the rainwater and the water in the stream still ran very clear.

After 11 days of hard slog, the skin on everyone's face was peeling. But we had reached our destination. It was high time I went home.

Translated by Wang Mingjie

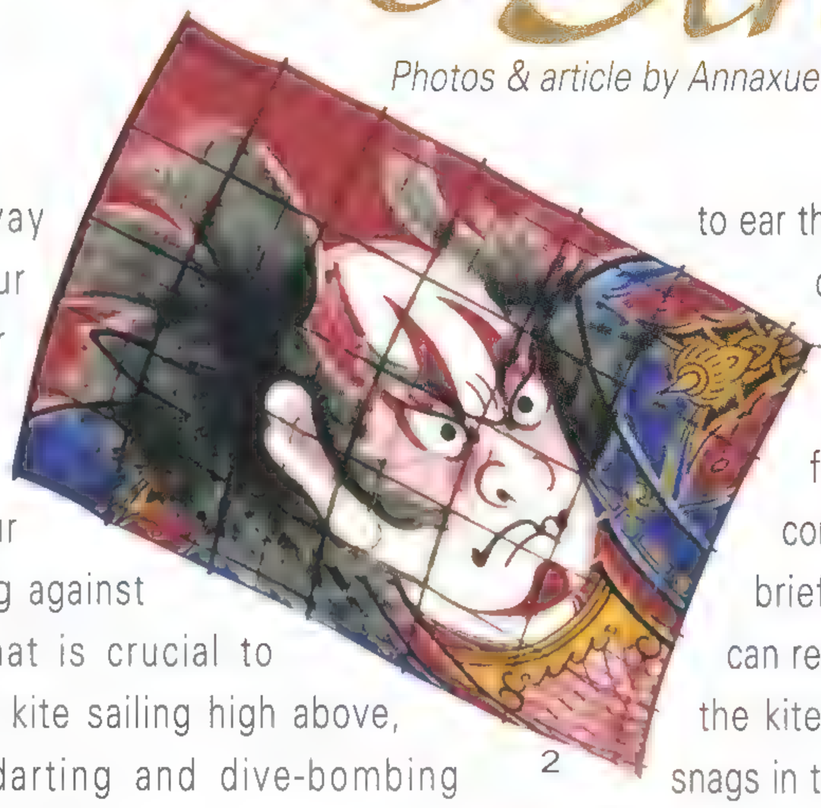
4 5

1. Yi shepherds herd their sheep up Mt. Dafengding in May and return at the end of August
2. The unspoiled Dafengding pastureland
3. A particularly striking rainbow over the grassland
4. A stone axe of the Yis, probably a New Stone Age tool
5. A crystalline rock from the Moon Lake

Pulling Strings

1

Photos & article by Annaxue Yang



2

Is the way you hold your tongue, or perhaps frown and screw up your eyes straining against the glare, that is crucial to keeping your kite sailing high above, instead of darting and dive-bombing downwards? This technique seems to be more effective for Andy, than for me.

We left early one morning travelling as a group of foreign teachers to visit Weifang (in Northeast China's Shandong Province), host of China's 17th Annual International Kite Festival. Now we are testing our l'mited skills at kite flying — just for the fun of it, not as competitors who come from all over the world to contest this challenging and captivating activity.

Weifang doesn't feature the usual attractions of classical Chinese "shanshui" (mountains and water) scenery featured in paintings or the historical sites steeped in ancient wonders. For most tourists Weifang is not on their "must see" list, but every year in April this comparatively small, quiet country town buzzes with people and kites.

It seems everywhere you look the sky is dotted with kites. Class groups of school children gather in the open fields. Grandparents watch as little ones playfully try out theirs in the streets. Families squeeze together on bicycles, motorbikes, in small vans, mini-buses or cars, all heading for the open field where the official competition is held.

Hanging on tightly as the wind threatens to ear the strings out of your grip or easing off the pressure just enough to allow the kite to glide upwards and float effortlessly, requires constantly being focused. A brief lapse in concentration can result in a tangled mess as the kite crashes into the dirt or snags in the strings of another kite as they both come tumbling down. I find it difficult to get my kite airborne, and mine is such a small simple style of kite compared to the bigger and more complicated designs.

I'm told the kites are classified according to image, structure, function or size. "Image" includes birds, insects and animals, geometric shapes and vessels, as well as characters from legends and words symbolising happiness and longevity. "Structure" refers to the framework, while "Function" covers toy kites, stunt flying, practical use in science, or emphasis on artwork with an appreciation of colours and patterns. "Size" ranges from huge, being over 10 square metres or having over 100 cellular panes, right down to delicate miniatures, which can be as small as a matchbox.

Handling the big kites requires a team of men to succeed in getting them airborne or landed without entangling the myriad strings. Hundreds of cel ular panes, which appear to stretch endlessly behind the ornate head of a dragon, have to be carefully unfolded and folded back into place. Smoke erupts from firecrackers to lend a touch of magic to this mystical creature, which has always been so important in Chinese culture.

These are intermingled with chains of butterflies, stingray fish and dragonflies as they criss-cross the sky and dart between Germany's Red Baron and the large face of a Native Indian from America. A large crab has claws that move, skilfully manipulated from below. The fierce face of the Kanji character on the Japanese kite called an Oodaka (giant kite) glares down at the spectators. Long tails of ribbons form multicoloured trails and figures of eight.

3

Do you know the Chinese word for kite? I learn that "fengzheng" (風箏) comes from "feng" meaning wind and "zheng" is a traditional musical string instrument. I had fallen in love with this instrument a few years ago when I stayed in Wuhan and bought one to take home to Australia. I failed to see the connection between it and a kite, until I heard the story of how wire whistles or bamboo strips were attached to kites during the Tang Dynasty (618—907) and how the wind created the music when they flew through the air.

4

The First Weifang International Kite Festival was held on April 1, 1983 with 3,000 Weifang kites flying in this milestone event. Now Weifang is the Kite Capital of the World and hosts the headquarters for the International Kite Federation.

Unfortunately we had missed all the pomp and pageantry of the opening ceremony with its parade of participants and entertainers, welcoming speeches, colourful displays, spectacular fireworks and thousands of cheering spectators, but I consoled myself with the thought of the inevitable numbness my rear end would have suffered from the stadium's cement seating.

However we did manage to squeeze under a big tent, the type you see at the circus, where we sat on wooden planks and applauded local entertainers singing, juggling and rap-dancing. This gave us a chance to eat lunch-hot, spicy kebabs.

Kites appeal to young and old alike with many local families making this festival the highlight of their year. It's the culmination of the year's preparation, much of it done by hand; hours of whittling bamboo, painting exquisite designs on transparently-thin paper, cutting and stretching silk, creating beautiful kites of all sizes and shapes, in keeping with traditions followed by families for decades.

I am so absorbed peering into the sky that I stumble around clicking my camera at the multitude of moving shapes. My oblivion to people around me is intermittedly interrupted by many of the local Chinese trying to get my attention so they can have photos taken with me. "Qingwen" (excuse me), as they pull on my sleeve or tap me on the shoulder and point at the camera. Three generations of a family crowd around me beaming for the camera. They are happy that I make a fuss over the cute baby.

At ground level, kite making and flying skills and techniques are being discussed and wondered about, with knowledge exchanged between the Chinese and kite enthusiasts from USA, Europe, Australia, Canada, South America, Japan and Korea. Much can be learnt from the experts, including the famous Pan Family, who have devoted their lives to this passion.

Wandering around just looking at the crowd is a welcome diversion from the constant strain of craning your neck arched back to follow the kites flying so high. A boat kite, too large to ever sail into the sky sits on the dusty bare earth. A life-size paper-mache tiger sits eyeballing Nic, the Canadian teacher. He is crouched down for a better look at this realistic creature, resulting in both of them falling over, much to the amusement of the shy, curious Chinese children.

After finally exhausting our enthusiasm for kite flying we head off to town to check out the shops. Such a festive atmosphere! It seems every inch of space is overtaken with kites hanging on display, both inside the shop and outside in the street. The choice is overwhelming! And so is the fervour of the seller eager to give me the best price-"special for you".

I succumb and end up juggling several boxes of carefully packed kites to send home to my family. Kites come in two varieties: those with fixed wings or detachable wings, which facilitates easy packing. With no time left to visit the World Kite Museum or kite factories and workshops, we fall into our van and do what most Chinese do when travelling-sleep!

My favourite kite was the folding screen depicting the birds and flowers so typical of beautiful Chinese painting. Back in Qingdao, I feel tired and dusty, but happy with my bid yellow butterfly featuring eyes that spin in the wind. I could have been excused as having a dose of too much sun for thinking that pigs really can fly! After today nothing would surprise me.

Traveller's Tips

How to get there: Weifang can be reached by taking plane (one hour) or railway (nine hours) from Beijing.

Accommodation:

Fuhua Hotel *****	Tel: (536) 8881 988	Standard room: 616/ room
Shengrong Hotel ***	Tel: (536) 8251 988	Standard room: 180~240/ room
Dongfang Hotel ***	Tel: (536) 8881 111	Standard room: 200~368/ room

Tourist information:

Travel agency: China Travel Service Head Office Tel: (10) 6462 2288

Add: No. 2 Beisanhuan Road East, Beijing.

Website: Shandong~ http://china-sd.net (English version) Kites~ www.chinakite.com

5

1. Puff the magic dragon
2. The fierce face of Kanji from Japan
3. Andy, a picture of concentration — is it the way he helds his tongue?
4. How can I get this to fly?
5. Hundred of cellular panes stretch endlessly skywards

EXPERIENCES IN TRAVEL

A Friendship in Xinjiang

People are allways fascinated by exotic natural landscapes such as azure blue skies and mirror-like lakes. In August 2002, I finally achieved my dream of touring Xinjiang. We hired a jeep and headed from Burjin in northern Xinjiang to Hemu Village and Lake Kanas. Before we reached Huomu Village, we had to drive over mountain ranges for more than four hours. Huomu is a peaceful mountain village with the Burjin River flowing silently behind it. Wild strawberries and mushrooms carpeted the banks of the river. At sunset, one can sit outside the wooden hut to appreciate the scene composed by the evening sky and household smoke. A PLA unit was billeted in neighbouring huts. Talking with them I learnt that they were responsible for updating the boundary map of Xinjiang using Global Positioning System equipment. They had conducted a three-day, three-night inspection deep in the mountains riding hired horses.

One day, three policemen from Guangdong and two staff from the Xinjiang Tourism Bureau came to Huomu Village. That night, we sat in a circle in a hut and talked freely. The Mongolian ladies sang their folk songs for us. On a starry night deep in the mountains in northern Xinjiang, the atmosphere was great. On the next day, the Released Army made breakfast on the grassland and invited us to share the meal. We gladly accepted their invitation. We met up with them again when rafting on the Kanas River later on. Though my friends exchanged contact numbers with them, we thought we would never hear from each other afterwards. Well, we received their call during this Mid-Autumn Festival. It was really moving. Xinjiang, we will be back!

Yiyun, H.K.

Railway Tour in Hokkaido

A few of my friends and I visited Hokkaido early last August and over our two-week holiday toured eastern, northern and central Hokkaido. During the tour, the railway was our main means of transport, and all the major scenic spots in Hokkaido can be reached by train.

Have you ever seen the Japanese film "Poppoya — Railroad Man"? There is a railway station which looks like the station in the film. It was built of wood, like something out of the 1950s. The train had only one carriage. I think it would look even more attractive when covered by thick snow in winter. However, the hut beside the station was not the hut of the railway guard as portrayed in the film. It is in fact a restaurant, and there were no guards stationed there either. The railway stations in Hokkaido have another idiosyncrasy — notes and photos left by tourists stuck on all the walls and ceiling of the waiting room. Naturally I also wrote down my feelings at that time and stuck it together with the boarding ticket on the wall.

Travelling along the JR route, one often has wide ocean views. Passing Sarobetsu Station, a section of the line runs alongside the Sea of Okhotsk, where you may see flocks of seagulls. Flowing ice can also be seen during winter!

Sightseeing trains are provided to all scenic spots in Hokkaido, such as the Akanko Kushiroshitsugen, the lavender sightseeing railway from Furano to Piie.

Yiwa, H.K.

Beloved Souvenirs

Tangka — Soul of Tibetan Art

Though I am not a Buddhist, I was once touched by religious power when in Lhasa, capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Walking along Barkor Street, I found colourful paintings displayed in one of the stores. When the shopkeeper told me they were tangkas, I immediately remembered the description in my travel guide: tangka — religious paintings of Tibet.

The subjects of tangka are more varied than I had imagined. Besides featuring Buddhist figures and stories, some of them are related to academic fields. The magnificent colours are made from natural resin, which are colour fast and environmentally friendly.

I've bought a 30-cm-wide, 35-cm-high, tangka painting of the Mandala (Sanskrit). The word originated from Indian Buddhism and means "transformation". It is usually used to ward off evil when practising Buddhism. It has now become a decoration in my room!

Purchase place: Tibet Dianfeng Handicrafts, 29 Barkor East Street, Lhasa

Price: 400 yuan

Storage: You can roll it and store it in a sturdy box, and hang it in a frame after returning home.

Eddie, H.K.

Necessities En Route

Private Chopsticks

It may surprise you that I need to bring along a pair of chopsticks during a trip. When touring in mainland China, bringing out one's personal chopsticks will always result in a quizzical look from others. "Madam, you don't have to use private chopsticks. Ours are not reusable and very clean." But it is those wooden chopsticks that made me determined to bring my own chopsticks when touring.

One of my "net" friends who studies the news media told me this: imagine I go for a two-week journey. I may have two meals every day. Therefore I may need 24 pairs of chopsticks. Compare the time needed for a tree to grow and the time needed to wash and dry my own chopsticks after every meal. Some of my friends agree with my stand, but some also think it is too much trouble, or creates the wrong image. Nevertheless, I still recommend you bring your own chopsticks if possible. When you see containers of wasted wooden chopsticks, you may understand.

Ma Hoi Ling, H.K.

Recommended Hostel

Warm Feeling in a Rural Hotel

If you visit Prince Edward Island (PEI) in eastern Canada, think of staying in a hotel in the countryside. Located in Kinkora, in the middle of the island, the hotel is a Victorian-style three-storeyed building over 80 years old with 12 suites. The owner recounted it was left to him by his grandfather. He then turned the building into a hotel 20 years ago. Every suite is exquisitely decorated, with warm, stylish classical furniture. There is a church, and farms and rivers in the tranquil environment around the hotel. The hotel is also close to the biggest town on the island, where Chinese food may be appreciated.

The couple who owned the hotel were friendly. It was Sunday on the day after I arrived, and he personally took us to nearby markets to buy daily necessities. Due to a change in the itinerary, we could only stay three days instead of four at the inn. But he did not mind, and even asked whether he could help with any difficulties we had on the way. On the day we left, he prepared a splendid breakfast for us. He told us that we were the first group of Hong Kong people to stay, hence he cherished this chance very much. He even asked us for our comments in the visitors' book.

Price: Twin-bed suite 68 CD/ night, three-bed suite 80 CD/ night

Add: The Kinkora Country Inn P.O. Box 16. Kindora, P.E.I.

Tel: 1-888-270-3337 or (902) 887-3337

Website: http://www.peisland.com/kinkora/inn.htm

Liang Ju Qiao, H.K.

Contributions Solicited

We are grateful for the warm support of our readers who have sent us their contributions. Please remember that you are always welcome to write to us about your various travel experiences to share with other readers. You can write articles on any topic related to travelling. Stories for this column should be at most 500 words. A full-length story more than 1,500 words with good photos may be published in other columns, such as "Traveller's Corner" or "Travel Journal".

Please mail your story to: English Editorial Department, Hong Kong China Tourism Press, 24/F Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, or send it via E-mail: edit-e@hkctp.com.hk.

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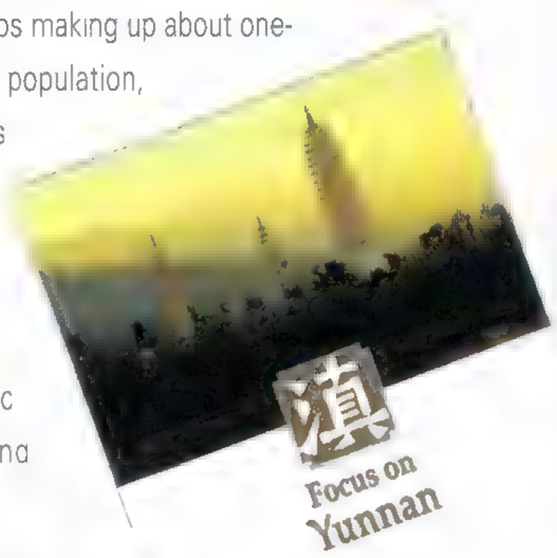
Focus on Yunnan

The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-La, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about one-third of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and customs.



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Focus on Fujian

Situated on the southeast coast, Fujian Province overlooks Taiwan Island across the Taiwan Strait. Its mountainous landscape includes the Wuyi Mountain Scenic Area, one of the UN World Heritage sites in China. The province's zigzag coastlines, numerous beaches and charming seas offer spectacular scenic beauty as well as historical and cultural interest in such places as the Drumming Wave Islet in Xiamen and the Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island.

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Focus on Shanghai

Shanghai, the largest metropolis in China, and formerly the Far East financial centre, has experienced dramatic development over the past century. The world-famous Bund along the Huangpu River shows you buildings of different historical periods and varied architectural styles, while skyscrapers are rising in the new area of Pudong. Shanghai's multiculturism is seen in its music — operas, nostalgic jazz and discos — and in the busy commercial district of Nanjing and Huaihai roads

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Focus on Shaanxi

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the yellow earth of the Loess Plateau.

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Focus on Guangdong

An important gateway into China, the fertile Pearl River Delta of the southern province of Guangdong fans out from Guangzhou to the South China Sea and borders Hong Kong and Macao. The province's natural scenic spots include the limestone pinnacles of Zhaoqing's Seven Star Crags, the red sandstone of Danxia Mountain, and the volcanic beauty of Xiqiao Mountain. The capital, Guangzhou, offers plenty of history in its museums, temples, mosques and old colonial buildings.

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Focus on Guizhou

Guizhou is a land of splendid natural scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.

Paperback HK$80 HK$76
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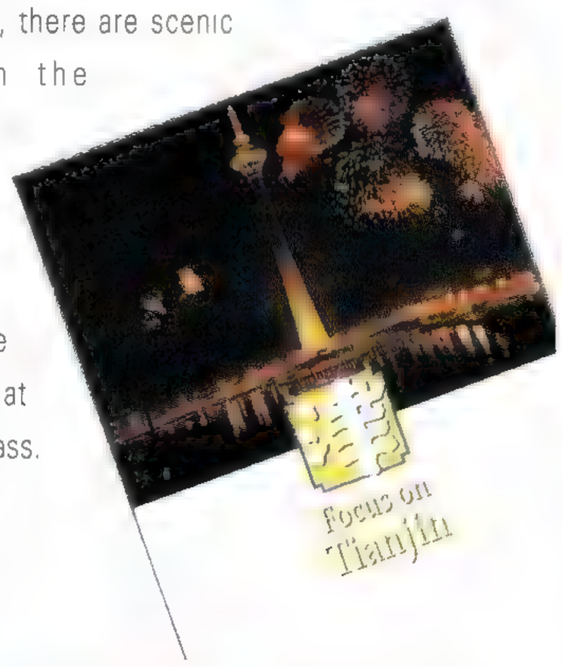
Focus on Tianjin

Tianjin, one of the four municipalities under direct Central Government administration, is an important industrial and commercial centre of China and the biggest port in the north. The history of the city can be found in its Ancient Culture Street, 100-year-old Western-style buildings, Opera Museum and Mazu Temple. Besides the TV Tower and the Haihe River in the city, there are scenic spots in the outskirts, including the Dule Temple and the Great Wall at Huangya Pass.



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Focus on Xinjiang

On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, which provide tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem imbedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak — the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan. The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian, Uzbek, Tajik, Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique colourful culture.

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Focus on Beijing

Beijing is a metropolis of everlasting charm. There are simply too many captivating things to see, to experience and to taste in this grand city with both old glamour and new mobility. There are historical sites such as the Palace Museum (the Forbidden City), the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace, and the Ming Tombs; there are also many scenic spots in its outskirts. Recently, tours have been organised for visitors to taste the real Beijing flavour of life — touring the small back lanes, having tea in a traditional-style teahouse and enjoying the Peking Opera.

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Focus on Shanxi

Shanxi Province, one of the birthplaces of the Chinese civilisation, has impressive ancient architecture and a wealth of well-preserved Buddhist temples, monasteries and grottoes. Among the most famous are the Yungang Grottoes containing some of China's oldest sculptures and Buddhist art, the Yongle Palace, the Jinci Temple, the Hanging Monastery built on a sheer cliff and the Wutai Mountain, one of China's most famous sacred Buddhist lands.

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Focus on Guangxi

Unusual topography has endowed the province with numerous spectacular karst formations — limestone caves, pinnacles and rocks. The most famous and enchanting scenic spot is Guilin, and the most travelled route, on the Lijiang River from Guilin to Yangshuo. The coastal city of Beihai has the country's largest beach, the Silver Beach. Other attractions include the varied traditional customs of ethnic minorities, the Sino-Vietnamese border area, and the mysterious Huasnan cliff paintings.

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City	Name	Star	Address	Tel	Fax
Xining	Qinghai Hotel	***	158 Huanghe Rd, Xining	(971) 6144888	
	Xining Hotel	***	215 Qiyi Rd, Xining	(971) 8238701	(971) 8238798
	Minzu Hotel	*	Dongda St, Xining	(971) 8177951	
	Yongfu Hotel	*	Jianguo Rd, Xining	(971) 8140236	
	Youzheng Mansion	*	Qilian Rd, Xining	(971) 8140711	
	Oversea Chinese Mansion		31 North Avenue, Xining	(971) 8231888	(971) 8234450
	Shengli Hotel		160 Huanghe Rd, Xining	(971) 6144365	(971) 6144464
	Xining Mansion		61 Jianghuo Rd, Xining	(971) 9249991	(971) 8149779

Hotels in Lhasa

City	Name	Star	Address	Tel	Fax
Lhasa	Lhasa Hotel	****	1 Minsu Rd, Lhasa	(891) 6832221	(891) 6835796
	Grand Hotel Tibet	***	196 Beijing Rd C, Lhasa	(891) 6826096	(891) 6832195
	Tibet Hotel Lhasa	***	221 Beijing Rd W, Lhasa	(891) 6834966	(891) 6836787
	Shangbala Hotel	***	No. 1 Danjielin Rd, Lhasa	(891) 6323888	(891) 6323577
	Sunlight Hotel	**	27 Linggyi Rd, Lhasa	(891) 6322227	(891) 6335675
	Tibet Gold Grain Hotel	**	14 Yutuo Rd, Lhasa	(891) 6330357	(891) 6330367
	Himalaya Hotel	*	6 Linggkor Rd E, Lhasa	(891) 6334082	(891) 6334855
	Kechu Hotel	*	Lhasa		
	Yak Hotel	*	Lhasa		
Bayi	Nyingchi Hotel		25 Chuanzang Rd, Bayi	(894) 5821300	
	Shidao Mingren Club		Gongbu Rd, Bayi	(894) 5821300	
Gyangtsê	Gyangtsê Hotel	**	Gyangtsê	(892) 8172222	(892) 8172220
Xigazê	Xigazê Qomolangma Hotel		Southeast of Gang-gen Garden Guesthouse, Xigazê	(892) 8823383	
	Xigazê Hotel		Jiefang Rd C, Xigazê	(892) 8822550	
	Xigazê Sangzhuze Hotel		2 Gonggalin Rd, Xigazê		
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Beijing — Xining	3 7	0825	1040	CA1207
	1 4 6	1355	1615	WH2125
	2 4 6	1525	1745	SZ4134
	1 3 5 7	1415	1635	SZ4134
	2 4 6	0740	1000	XW 849
Xining — Beijing	3 7	1120	1330	CA1208
	1 4 6	1710	1905	WH2126
	2 4 6	1825	2040	SZ4133
	1 3 5 7	1715	1930	SZ4133
	2 4 6	2000	2215	XW 850
Chengdu — Xining	1	1900	2020	SZ4205
	2 5 7	0755	0925	SZ4205
	1 4	1655	1840	3U 223
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1035	1200	2Z 451
Xining — Chengdu	1 2	100	2220	SZ4206
	2 5 7	1005	1125	SZ4206
	1 4	1910	2055	3U 224
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0840	1000	2Z 452
Chongqing — Xining	2 4 6	1705	1900	2Z 420
Xining — Chongqing	3 5 7	0925	1120	2Z 419
Golmud — Xining	2 5 7	1400	1500	SC 110
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1340	1440	SC 292
	2 4 6	1140	1250	2Z 257
Xining — Golmud	2 5 7	1225	1325	SC 109
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1210	1310	SC 291
	2 4 6	0950	1100	2Z 258
Guangzhou — Xining	3	0745	1040	SZ4714
	2 4 6	1615	1905	XO9307

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Xining — Guangzhou	3	1620	1910	SZ4713
	2 4 6	1225	1515	XO9308
Jinan — Xining	2 5 7	0820	1145	SC 109
Xining — Jinan	2 5 7	1540	1900	SC 110
Kunming — Xining	2 4	1740	2010	XO9409
	6	1650	1920	XO9409
Xining — Kunming	2 4	1455	1655	XO9410
	6	1405	1605	XO9410
Lhasa — Xining	1 3 5 7	1520	1720	SZ4218
	3	1400	1540	SZ4714
	1 2 4 6	1345	1545	SZ4811
Xining — Lhasa	1 2 4 6	1040	1245	SZ4217
	3	1140	1320	SZ4713
	3 7	1235	1440	SZ4812
	1 5	1235	1440	SZ4812
Shanghai (Hongqiao) — Xining	2 4 6	0850	1310	WH2504
	3 7	0750	1150	SZ4812
	1 5	0730	1150	SZ4812
Xining — Shanghai (Hongqiao)	2 4 6	1350	1735	WH2503
	1 2 4 6	1625	1955	SZ4811
Xi'an — Xining	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1030	1140	SC 291
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1710	1830	2Z 207
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1850	2010	2Z 227
Xining — Xi'an	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1510	1620	SC 292
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1230	1340	2Z 208
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1710	1820	2Z 228
Zhengzhou — Xining	2 5 7	1005	1145	SC 109
Xining — Zhengzhou	2 5 7	1540	1720	SC 110

Flights to and from **Lhasa**

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Beijing — Lhasa	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0950	1450	SZ4112
	4 7	0945	1450	SZ4146
Lhasa — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1600	2040	SZ4111
	4 7	1600	2040	SZ4145
Chengdu — Lhasa	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1305	1450	SZ4112
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0640	0830	SZ4401
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0650	0850	SZ4403
Lhasa — Chengdu	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1600	1740	SZ4111
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0940	1120	SZ4402
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1000	1140	SZ4404
Chongqing — Lhasa	4 7	1305	1450	SZ4146
	2	1100	1335	SZ4312
	2 4 6	0720	0930	SZ4419
Lhasa — Chongqing	4 7	1600	1745	SZ4145

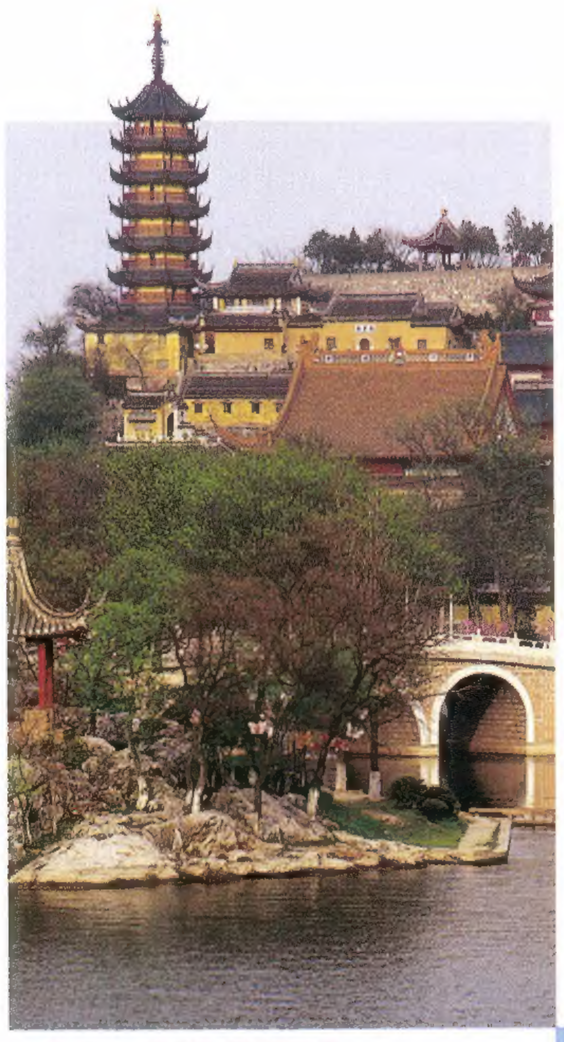
Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
	2	1415	1615	SZ4311
	2 4 6	1010	1220	SZ4420
Guangzhou — Lhasa	2	0825	1335	SZ4312
	3	0745	1320	SZ4714
Lhasa — Guangzhou	2	1415	1845	SZ4311
	3	1400	1910	SZ4713
Shanghai (Hongqiao) — Lhasa	3 7	0750	1440	SZ4812
	1 5	0730	1440	SZ4812
Lhasa — Shanghai	1 2 4 6	1345	1955	SZ4811
Xi'an — Lhasa	1 2 4 6	0855	1245	SZ4217
	1 3 5 7	1045	1440	SZ4812
Lhasa — Xi'an	1 3 5 7	1520	1855	SZ4218
	1 2 4 6	1345	1730	SZ4811

** For reference only.*

Airline codes:

CA = Air China
SC = Shandong Airlines
SZ = China Southwest Airlines
WH = China Northwest Airlines
XO = Xinjiang Airlines
XW = China Xinhua Airlines
2Z = Chang'an Airlines
3U = Sichuan Airlines

JANUARY



31/12/2002~1/1/2003

The custom of **ringing bell at Jinshan Temple** located in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province, can be dated back to the Tang Dynasty. Every year, the ceremony attracts large flocks of monks, nuns, Buddhist pilgrims, and tourists who pray for good luck in the coming year. Besides ringing the bell, tourists can enjoy domestic artistic performances and savour vegetarian dishes in restaurants in the temple this year.

January

Tourists are welcome to various winter programmes in China. During the **Jilin Rime Festival**, a grand ice and colourful lantern show, ice and snow games, releasing lanterns on the river, a fireworks display and a parade of colourful boats are held. Local people will perform the northeastern Yangge dance. The folk festivals of the Manchu and Korean people are celebrated. Exhibitions of delicious northeastern cuisine and trade fairs are also organised.

5/1~4/2/2003

Harbin, captial of Heilongjiang Province, welcomes all winter lovers with its fruitful activities in the first month of the new year. These include the **Harbin Ice and Snow Festival**, where fascinating ice-sculptures and winter sports are featured; the **8th Harbin International Snow Sculpture Competition**; and the **China International Winter Sports Goods & Garments Exhibition 2003**. The exhibition will invite about 1,000 famous Chinese enterprises to showcase their most lately products.

24/12/2002~30/1/2003

With strong love for performing art which has led him to capture each striking moment of stage performances, Cheung Chi Wai, is being called "Hong Kong's one-and-only full-time stage photographer". The **Liberty on Stage-Stage Photography Exhibition** presents his works with various operas, musicals, plays, concerts of different sizes, dance performances, etc.

Opening hours: 10:00~19:00
Venue: 1st Floor of Macao Museum of Art

14/12/2002~9/2/2003

What cool! The **Hong Kong World Carnival** is back! Organised through a joint venture between UK Funfairs Ltd and Hong Kong-based World Carnival Ltd, the fair is expected to attract more than two million visitors. It will feature about 130 rides, games and attractions covering an area of over 46,000 square metres, which is one-third larger than last year.

Venue: The former Kai Tak Airport in Kowloon City, Hong Kong

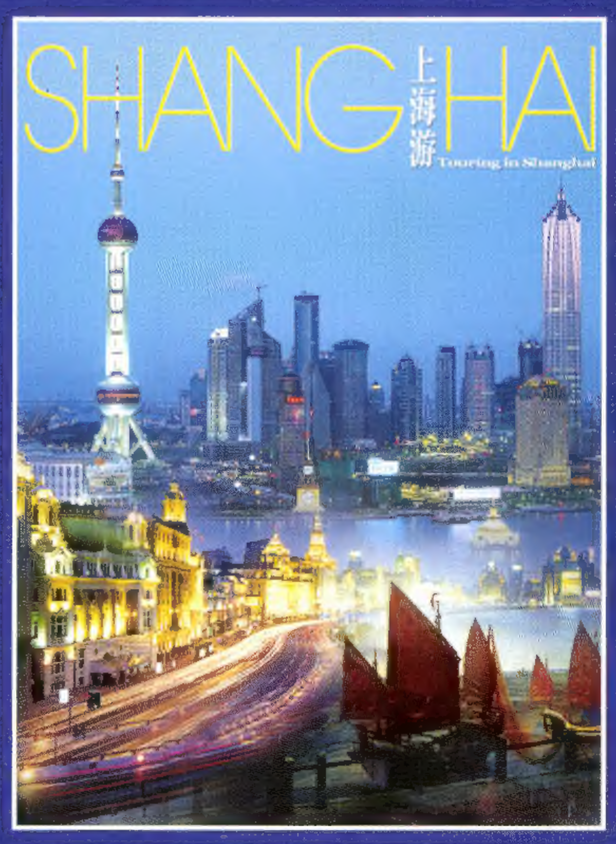
30/11~Feb, 2003

The first **Winter of Mt. Emei Travel Culture Festival** will focus on six cultural fields including ice and snow resources, Buddhism, dining, ecosystem, hot springs, and martial arts. On Dec 31, 2002, an unique lantern fair will be held at the Wannian Temple. At the New Year Eve, grand Buddhist ceremonies will be held at Baoguo and Wannian temples, welcoming pilgrims and visitors on an elevation of 3,099 metres.

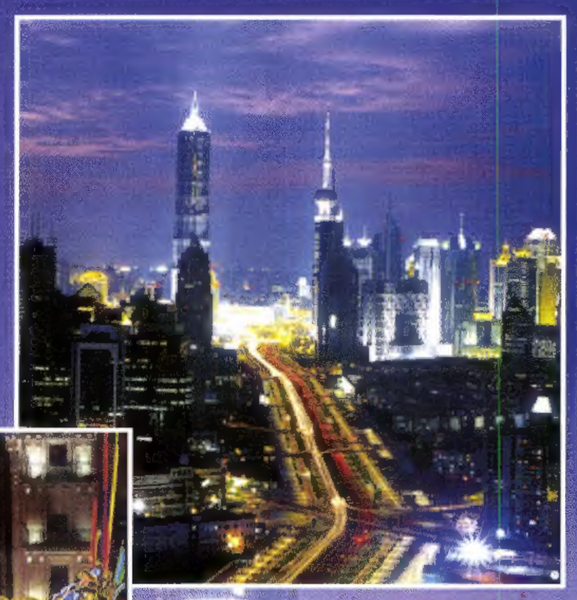
Jan 2003

The Chinese regard nothing more important than the **Lunar New Year Day**, which will fall on late January, 2003. A series of traditional celebrations will be held throughout the country for nearly a month. For instance, in northern Shaanxi Province, there will be grand waist-drum dance, while fire works and dragon dance are must auspicious programmes. Travellers don't miss these breath-taking events!

BEST SELLER



Shanghai has evolved at an unprecedented speed for decades into the biggest commercial city in China and one of the great metropolises of the world. Favourably located at the mouth of the Yangtse River, Shanghai has a long history and a rich culture. Commercial tower blocks and traditional buildings exude their individual charms simultaneously in the Pudong District, where hundreds of buildings in different styles, old or new, are collectively known as the Exposition of World Architecture. A kaleidoscope of entertainments and festivals of Old Shanghai attracts scores of entrepreneurs and travellers alike. "Touring in Shanghai" takes you deeper into this vibrant city through spectacular photography, along with outlines for more than 10 different kinds of tours including a shopping tour, popular tourist sights, cultural excursions, and more. Practical information summarises accommodations, transport and dining options, and tourist maps are also included. "Touring in Shanghai" is the latest, most comprehensive travel pictorial of Shanghai available in Hong Kong.



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